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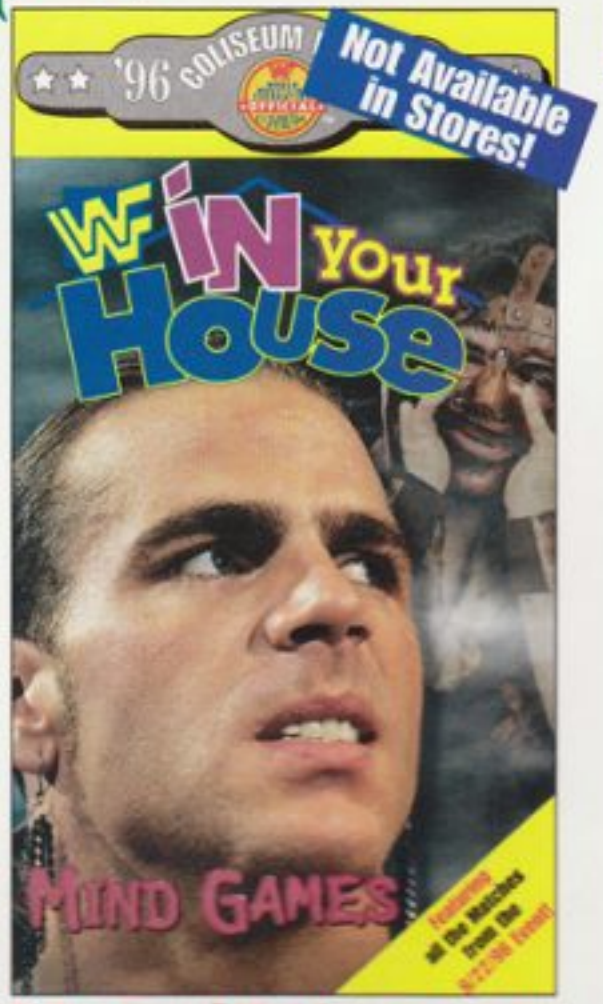

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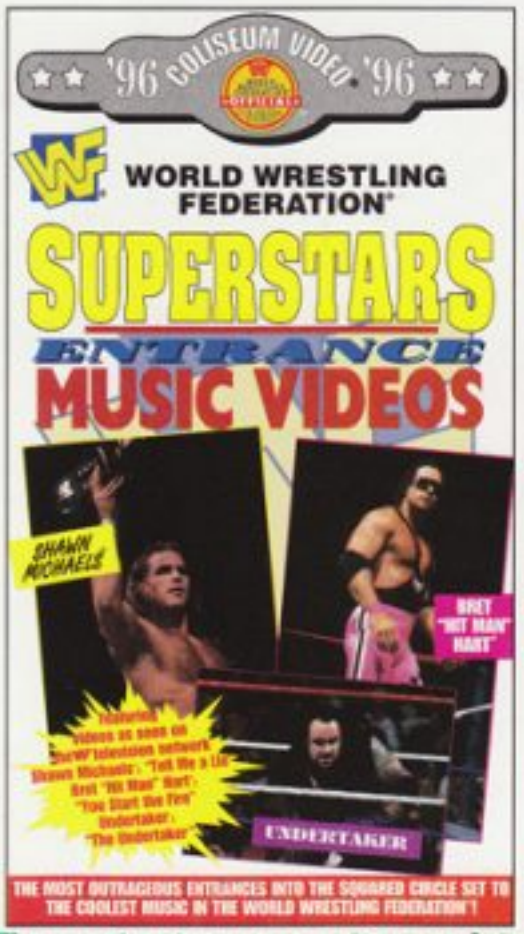

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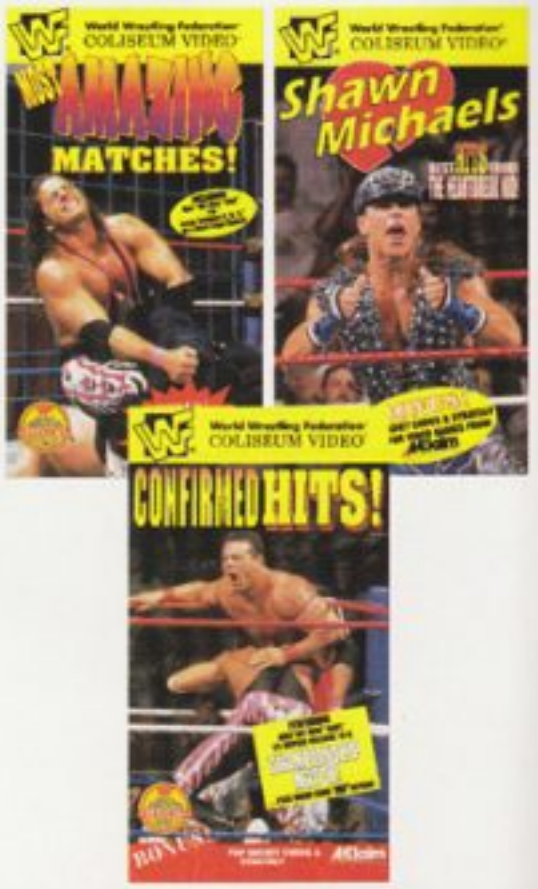

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WF RAW
January/February 1997 ▪ Volume 2 ▪ Number 1

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This magazine contains nothing but high-risk, nail-biting, off-the-top-rope, uncensored MAYHEM! It is only recommended for the serious World Wrestling Federation fan! May prove to be far too much to handle for the lighter-weight fan, pregnant women and those who suffer from high blood pressure.

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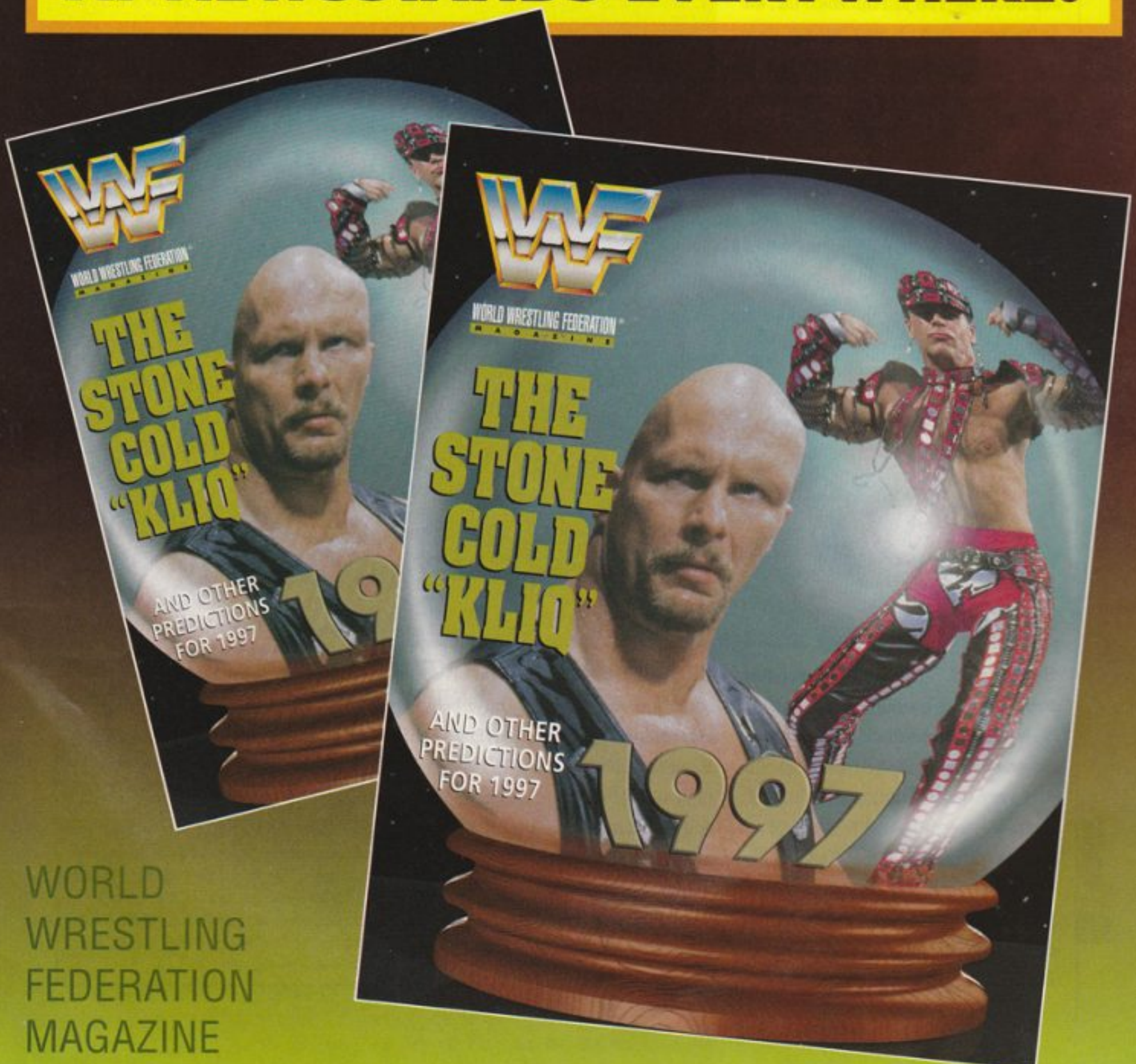

WORLD
WRESTLING
FEDERATION
MAGAZINE

My Heaven! Is Brother Love Set To Return?

Take out your prayer book and open up your POCKETBOOK!!! My top informant has just informed me, the Informer, that none other than

BROTHER LOVE may be set to return to the World Wrestling Federation!!!

Now, is there more to this rumor than meets the eye? Well, the answer to that very question may just lie in the January issue of *World Wrestling Federation Magazine*! In that fine publication, for which I also write, you will find exclusive photos of Brother Love, taken by staff ace photographer Tom Buchanan on the set of ABC's *Boy Meets World*. Also found in these photos are shots of the Man They Call VADER, who played a major role in this particular episode. WELL evidently, my source has informed me, that during the taping VADER and BROTHER LOVE were involved in some top-secret, heavy-duty, behind-closed-doors meetings! AND JAMES E. was nowhere in sight!!!

Just informal chit-chat between two acquaintances, you say? Maybe... maybe NOT! I think NOT!!! As you may have read in the last issue of *RAW*, I stated in this very column that CORNETTE was guaranteeing VADER the Federation Title by Christmas! Well, not only has that not happened, but CORNETTE wasn't even capable of getting his Mastodon the *Survivor Series* title shot which he had promised since *SummerSlam*!!! There's definitely trouble in K-Mart, kids, and from the way I, the Informer, see it—JIMBO may be out and JUMBO may be in!!!

I'll keep you posted! ■

Why Sunny May Be All Hart!

She said it... numerous times... yet nobody believed it. Well, START BELIEVING!!!

That's right. According to a high-ranking Federation official who has requested anonymity, SUNNY may be close to inking a deal that would have her managing the career of... BRET "HIT MAN" HART!!! You heard it here first, sports fans! The Golden Haired Fox has been dropping Bret's name for months on the Saturday morning USA Network show *Live Wire*, but nobody was taking her seriously. Well, kids, according to this official, Sunny was DEAD SERIOUS!!!

"Bret is very impressed with SUNNY's track record in the tag team ranks," said the source. "However, perhaps even more important, he is "OVERWHELMED" by her drive, desire and determination! In my opinion, much like himself, Bret views SUNNY as a goal-driven individual, and I wouldn't be surprised for ONE MINUTE if he agreed to let her represent him!" One word—WOW!!!

SHAWN MICHAELS VS. THE UNDERTAKER—MAYBE GOLDUST VS. MANKIND—POSSIBLY

Based on the feedback given to the World Wrestling Federation by its fans, a source close to Federation president GORILLA MONSOON informed me, the Informer, earlier this week that a new "trend" may start concerning the booking of Federation matches as early as January!

"Based on the positive feedback received from the fans concerning the HUNTER HEARST-HELMSLEY/ STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN match at October's *In Your House*, Federation officials are considering getting away from the more "traditional" way of booking matches and going more to the "good guy vs. good guy" type of matches, or the "bad guy vs. bad guy".

Some matches that are said to be on the drawing board may include the following: BRET HART vs. AHMED JOHNSON, SYCHO SID vs. STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN and WILDMAN MARC MERO vs. FLASH FUNK.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!!!

Now I'm really going out on a limb here! Based on my reputation, my usual good judgment has made even me, the Informer, skeptical and leery about reporting on this next "would be" match that is "supposedly" also on the table, HOWEVER, my source insists that it may be all but a DONE DEAL!! Are you ready?

WRESTLEMANIA XIII

VINCE McMAHON vs. JIM ROSS

You heard it here first!!!

WHO IS THE EXECUTIONER?

If you know that physique and you SWEAR you've seen that working style before, it may very well be... BECAUSE YOU HAVE!!!

If you are an avid wrestling fan—and you have to be if you're reading this magazine—then you certainly DO KNOW the true identity of the man behind the mask... THE EXECUTIONER!!!

HOWEVER, if by some chance you haven't yet figured it out, here's a helpful hint:

AMONG THE BROKEN PIECES OF STONE CAME HIS DESCENDANT. ■

Letters to the Editor:

Fax

Dear Editor,

I'm proud that Jim Ross finally spilled his guts to a worldwide audience on *Monday Night RAW* some weeks back. Ross finally acknowledged that this is WRESTLING, not PeeWee's Playhouse! Now good ol' J.R. is bringing in some REAL athletes... not plumbers and clowns. He brought back Razor and Diesel—that just goes to show his efforts to revitalize the Federation. If you were smart—and I know that you are, Russo—you would devote an entire half of this magazine to the man who will continue to lead the World Wrestling Federation past the year 2000!

Kevin Dillon
Memphis, TN

EMail

Dear Editor,

KUDOS to the World Wrestling Federation—and especially to *RAW Magazine*—on acknowledging the presence of other wrestling organizations throughout the world. In the past, it has been almost taboo for anyone to mention the existence of ECW and the WCW, but times have changed and so has the World Wrestling Federation. Hopefully, the Federation will look into getting some of the top marquee names in each of these Federations so it can continue to be the leader in sports-entertainment.

Justin Ripco
chazz@rci.com

Letter

Dear Editor,

I would like to say it was great to see a story about Ray Rougeau in the last issue of *RAW Magazine*. Since he entered the Federation in the late 80s as

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- THE ROSS REPORT: ***OPTION 6***
- FRENCH/CANADIAN REPORT: ***OPTION 7***
- POST-MATCH INTERVIEWS: ***OPTION 8***

(Left) Reader Kevin Dillon from Memphis, Tennessee, gives credit to Jim Ross for acknowledging that this is WRESTLING, not PEEWEE's PLAYHOUSE!!!

(Right) Remember him? How could anyone forget him? According to the Editor, the Grand Wizard of Wrestling WAS the best!

one-half of the Fabulous Rougeau Brothers, Ray has always been a favorite of mine! I was happy to read about the boxing match that occurred in Canada between the legendary Quebecer and Owen Hart. It's great to know that *RAW Magazine* reports on stories that we normally don't get to see on Federation television.

Lou Ventude
Kansas City, MO

Letter

Dear Editor,

I thought the "Top Ten Greatest World Wrestling Federation Managers of All Time" article was by far the best in the series thus far. In my opinion, the greatest manager in the history of the Federation has been none other than the Grand Wizard Ernie Roth. He made the wrestling business fun, as well as taking Stan Stasiak and Billy Graham to the top. It's nice to know that the writers of *RAW Magazine* still remember Ernie and all he did for the sport. As long as there are managers in the World Wrestling Federation, the Grand Wizard will always be the greatest, in my opinion. Thanks for putting Ernie in his rightful place among the legends.

Brandon Milantro
Sioux City, Iowa

EMail

Dear Editor,

First things first. I just wanted to say that you guys are doing a great job with the *RAW Magazine*—especially the photo layouts! Exceptional! Second, I've been thinking for quite some time about the popularity of the old *Saturday Night's Main Event*. No doubt, fans around the world have been aching for another late night show for the mature audience. Teaming *Monday Night RAW* with another late night live Federation broadcast would make this the greatest tag team in the history of Federation television. Why not bring back something like *SNME* for the older fans to enjoy!

Adrian MacLellan
AdrianMacLellan@emin30.mail.aol.com

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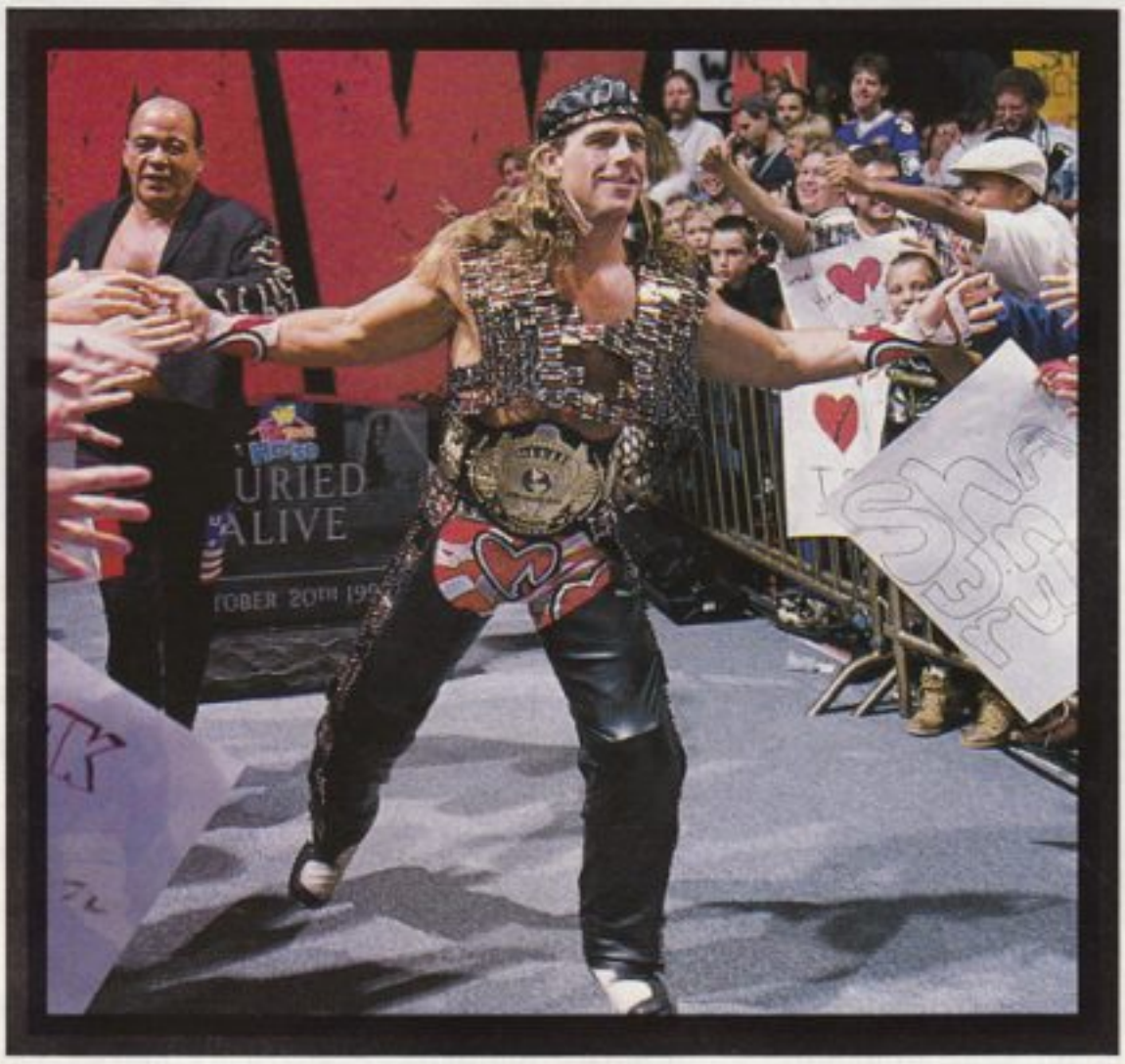
WORLD WRESTLING FEDERA

As of November 16, 1996, World Wrestling Federation Title Champion: **Shawn Michaels**

1. SYCHO SID
2. BRET "HIT MAN" HART
3. MANKIND
4. STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN
5. UNDERTAKER
6. HUNTER HEARST-HELMSLEY
7. AHMED JOHNSON
8. VADER
9. WILDMAN MARC MERO
10. GOLDUST



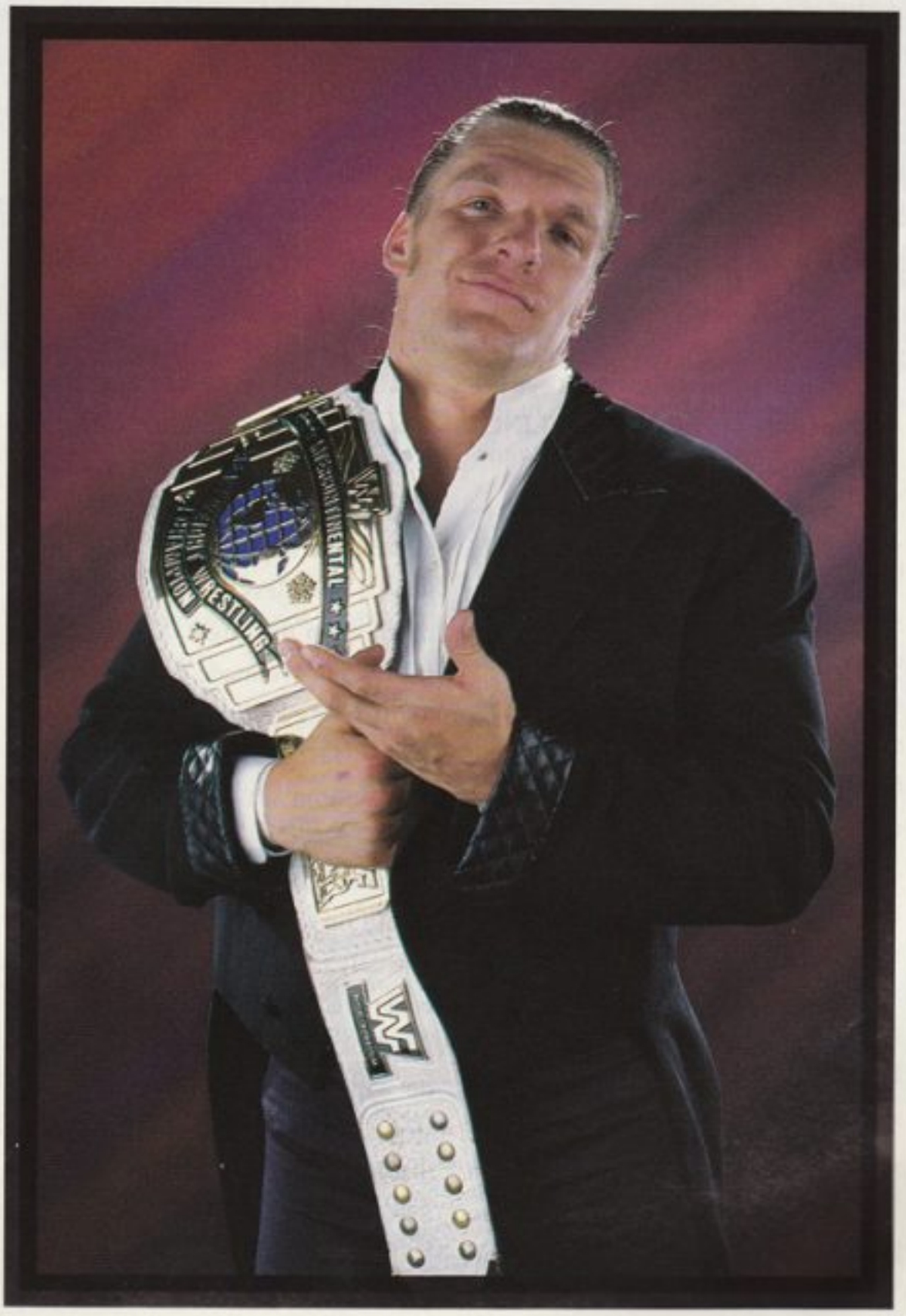
ANALYSIS

By the time this magazine hits the newsstands, the 1996 *SURVIVOR SERIES* will have come and gone. In other words, SYCHO SID may very well be walking around the NEW World Wrestling Federation Champion. Going into the contest, Sid was clearly the favorite. His height, weight and strength advantage over Shawn Michaels was astronomical. However, there it is again, that word RESILIENCE. The one intangible that simply makes the Champion just that... the Champion. A notch down from that top spot has got to be BRET "HIT MAN" HART. I don't care how long he's been away from the squared circle, in my opinion Bret still may very well be the best there is, the best there was and the best there ever will be. However, if he is going to claim that title... he is simply going to have to do it all over again. In time, I feel he will. If Shawn is still the Champion following the *Survivor Series*, he has yet to prove to the world that he can defeat MANKIND. It was outside interference that cost Mankind the title when these two locked up in September's *In Your House*, not the Heartbreak Kid. As far as the match-up pitting Mankind against Sycho Sid? Believe me, I would pay money—BIG MONEY—to see that one!!! What can I say except that STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN is championship caliber, regardless of how he faired in his Garden party with the Hit Man. As a matter of fact, if he did indeed defeat Bret Hart at the *Survivor Series*, he could very well be sitting in the No. 1 spot, next time I sit down to write this column. THE UNDERTAKER crawls up three spots from the last edition of this magazine, in that he DID defeat Mankind at October's *In Your House*, while HUNTER HEARST-HELMSLEY debuts in the top ten at No. 6, as he did claim the Intercontinental Title from the Wildman Marc Mero. As AHMED JOHNSON gets ready to return to action, the "Pearl River Powerhouse" checks in at No. 7 on reputation alone, as VADER pummels six slots, due to a damaging defeat at the hands of Sycho Sid. WILDMAN MARC MERO and GOLDUST round out the field due to devastating defeats (to Helmsley and Mero, respectively) in the month of October.

TION'S ~~OFFICIAL~~ RANKINGS

World Wrestling Federation Intercontinental Title Champion: **Hunter Hearst-Helmsley**

1. STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN
2. AHMED JOHNSON
3. WILDMAN MARC MERO
4. SYCHO SID
5. MANKIND
6. VADER
7. THE SULTAN
8. THE STALKER
9. FAAROOQ
10. GOLDUST



ANALYSIS

In the excitement of the "Perfect Hoax", one can almost forget that STONE COLD STEVE AUSTIN defeated Triple H the very night before at October's *In Your House*. I didn't. Austin is more than capable of repeating that task—anytime, any place—and could be destined to become the next IC Champ. Next on the list is AHMED JOHNSON. Remember, Ahmed was never actually BEATEN for the Intercontinental Title... he was forced to "hand it over" due to injury. I look for him to come back, and come back with a vengeance like we've never seen in him before. On the heels of Ahmed is WILDMAN MARC MERO who for all intents and purposes was conned out of the title by Helmsley and Hennig. Marc Mero is nothing if not relentless, and that trait could very well assist him in getting back what he feels is "rightfully" his. SYCHO SID climbs closer to the top, even though his focus doesn't lie in this division, while MANKIND drops two notches due to his Buried Alive loss to the Undertaker. VADER, who in my opinion may have dropped out of the Federation title picture altogether, can make a great impact here. Newcomers THE SULTAN and THE STALKER continue to impress. FAAROOQ's injury drops him down seven slots, while the flamboyant and former two-time champion GOLDUST is in desperate need of a win.

Take Your TV and Stick It!!!

By Vic Venom

(DISCLAIMER: THE OPINIONS AND VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS COLUMN AREN'T NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION OR TITANSPORTS.)

Fifteen minutes of fame? I call it one hour of SHEER HELL!!!

By now, I'm sure that many of you are aware that I finally got the opportunity to make my long-awaited—EXTREMELY OVERDUE—television debut, when I appeared on USA Network's *Live Wire* on Saturday, October 5. Now, with all due respect to the executive producer of that show, I am here today to say one thing, and one thing only—YOU CAN TAKE YOUR TV SHOW AND YOU CAN STICK IT!!!

Now, before I begin decapitating heads, I would first like to thank Vince McMahon for making my television appearance possible. If anybody's got any guts in this lousy company, it's McMahon, and let me tell you why. On Friday afternoon at approximately 3 p.m., I went into McMahon's office with a lot on my mind. Face-to-face, I told the chairman of TitanSports how I thought *Live Wire* "SUCKED"—in those exact words. When he asked me why, I basically laid out the following:

1. It's nothing more than an infomercial for the upcoming Pay-Per-View.
2. Jim Cornette is living in the 80s, and no one cares what he has to say anymore.
3. Dok Hendrix is nothing more than a walking, talking billboard.
4. What true wrestling fan ALIVE cares about the opinions expressed by Todd Pettengill. I mean, don't misunderstand me... Todd is a great on-air personality—one of the best—BUT what exactly are his "WRESTLING" credentials?
5. The only reason ANYBODY watches the show in the first place is in hopes of catching a peak at Sunny's incredible CLEAVAGE!!!

OUCH!!!

Well, McMahon sat and McMahon listened. No, he didn't throw up the predictable wall of defense, which I was prepared to climb. Instead he openly AGREED with many of my points. So, the question he posed to me was, "Well, if this is the case, what do you suggest we do about it?" Without hesitation, I put on my salesman suit—and you know how I hate suits—and delivered the sales pitch of my life.

"It's time to bring Vic Venom to life, Vince," I suggested. "Let me go out there [on *Live Wire*] and tell it like it is!"

Well, what would you say?" he asked.

Placing my Spaldings firmly in my hand, I said, "I would say that *Live Wire* sucks!"

After pausing for a few brief moments, Vince looked me in the eye and confidently answered, "Go for it!"

"Excuse me?" I questioned.

"Go for it," he said. "If you feel that strongly about what you're telling me... then go for it!"

That's all I needed to hear. Vince was calling me out on the carpet and I was prepared! My Hoover was set on shag, ready to run over and SUCK UP anyone and anything that stood in my way!!! Needless to say, I didn't get much sleep that night. My adrenaline rush would've made Jimmy Hendrix high! I was kissing the sky because after THREE LONG YEARS, Vic Venom was about to have his day in court!!!

Like a good soldier, I arrived at the studio on time, 7:36 a.m.—SHARP. The only other "talent", as I would now be referred to as, who arrived before me was Dok Hendrix. No, it had nothing to do with the "Freebird" catching the worm, it had more to do with the hour that MICHAEL P.S. HAYES needed in make-up to make himself look at least halfway presentable!!! By 8 a.m., Jim Cornette had shown up, followed by—

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last but certainly not least—the "princess". Now that all "talent" was gathered, we were ushered into the "green room" by executive producer Kevin Dunn, to talk about what the content on today's show was going to be.

"Vic, what's your agenda?" he asked.

"Well, first I'm gonna expose Dok Hendrix as being Michael P.S. Hayes. Then I'm gonna rip Jim Cornette for still living in the *Midnight Express* era. From there, I'm gonna put Vince McMahon on the hot seat, only to follow that up with my theory of why the RATINGS for this show are so LOW."

"No you can't do that," replied Dunn.

"I can't do what?" I asked.

"You can't talk about the ratings. Such a small percentage of our audience knows anything about ratings. Talking about them would be irrelevant," answered Dunn.

Now, unless PIECES OF WHITTLED WOOD are watching our show, who doesn't understand ratings? *Frasier* vs. *Home Improvement*. Letterman vs. Leno. The battleground known as the *6 O'Clock News*. Ratings wars have become a pop culture topic in the 90s! I mean, even my 9-YEAR-OLD SON understands the significance of the Monday Night Ratings War! But hey, he's the executive producer and if it's a touchy subject for him—NO PROBLEM!!! The bottom line was that only three people—Cornette's mother, a guy selling pencils, and his dog—had watched *Live Wire* the previous week, but hey, WE DON'T NEED TO LET THE GENERAL PUBLIC KNOW THAT!!!

Let me get off the subject here for a second, because this is really bothering me. Let's get one thing straight. I, Victor Venomecchi (my real name, you idiots, what did you think I was born with the name Vic Venom) am employed by TITAN SPORTS! THEY PAY ME TO WRITE THIS COLUMN. Therefore, when I RIP something, I am only doing it in the hope of BETTERING the company as a whole. I am not doing it to hurt the World Wrestling Federation. My style, however, is TO BE HONEST. To call a SPADE a SPADE. If nobody is watching *Live Wire*—and it is because "IN MY OPINION" the show SUCKS—then I will simply come out and say "THE SHOW SUCKS!" I can sit here and CANDY COAT it as long as you like, but a). that's just not my style, and b). what's the point? Before you can FIX a problem, you must first ADMIT that there is a problem.

I hate it when they make me write these captions for these stupid photos. You see that guy—that's me! P.S. I wonder what's bothering Vince?

I admitted that "IN MY OPINION" there was a problem with *Live Wire* and now, being a faithful employee of TitanSports, I was going to do everything in my power to fix it! If you don't agree with my style that's fine, but the only way I know how to deal with life is by accepting it for what it is, then DEALING with it!

So, I did *Live Wire*. For my first time on camera I was quite pleased. I wasn't at all nervous and I feel that I met my personal agenda the best that I could. Following the show, Vince gave me some "on-camera" pointers, and I greatly appreciated that. He also mentioned that he felt I cut too many "traditional rasslin' promos" instead of being a straight-shooting journalist. However, with that comment... I disagree. Whether Vince McMahon realized it or not... I shot straight. They weren't "promos". Everything I said came from the heart... came from my 25-plus years of being a wrestling fan. Maybe my delivery was loud and obnoxious, but hey, when you deal with me—that's what you get. I preach the truth and that's what I gave. If you don't want the truth... don't put Vic Venom on TV.

Evidently, some wished they hadn't.

"YOU CAN'T GO ON TV AND SAY THAT *LIVE WIRE* SUCKS!!!"

Those were the words of a Titan bigwig who called me and LAMBASTED me following the show.

"IF YOU SAY THE SHOW SUCKS, THEN WHY IS ANYBODY GOING TO WATCH IT? YOU SHOULD HAVE GONE ON THERE AND SAID, 'Hey, guys, I think we can make this show better.'"

Yeah, right. Wait a minute, let me put on my TUTU and do *SWAN LAKE* for you!!!

FANS ARE GOING TO WATCH THIS SHOW BECAUSE IT IS THE FANS WHO SUPPORT US—NO MATTER WHAT WE DO, EINSTEIN!!! THAT IS WHY THEY ARE CALLED... FANS. HOWEVER, BY BEING HONEST WITH THEM YOU ARE SAYING THAT WHILE THE SHOW MAY NOT BE LIVING UP TO THEIR EXPECTATIONS, THE WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION IS READY, WILLING AND ABLE TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT POSSIBLE TO GIVE THEM—THE FANS—EVERYTHING THAT THEY WANT... AND MORE!!!

AGAIN—HONESTY.

Back to the Titan bigwig.

"YOU WENT ON THERE AND RIPPED EVERYTHING!!! YOU WERE NOTHING MORE THAN A TYPICAL WRESTLING HEEL"!

TYPICAL WRESTLING HEEL? Excuse me, but didn't I say that "SHAWN MICHAELS WAS PERHAPS THE GREATEST FEDERATION CHAMPION OF ALL TIME?!" Is that something that a TYPICAL WRESTLING HEEL would say?! The only things I ripped were things that needed—desperately needed—RIPPING!!! If you can't stand the heat—GET OUT OF THE KITCHEN!!! Or better yet... GET ME THE HELL OUT!!!

At this point, I reminded Mr. Big Wig that perhaps he should have read a few of my columns before he agreed to put me on the air.

With that comment he said,

"COMPARED TO THE TELEVISION AUDIENCE, NOBODY—I SAID NOBODY—READS YOUR MAGAZINE COLUMNS!!!"

Well, Mr. Big Wig, perhaps you're right, but the bottom line is that as long as ONE READER is out there who can steam a mirror with his or her breath, Vic Venom is GOING TO TELL THEM ONE THING AND ONE THING ONLY... THE TRUTH!!!

To make a long story short when all was said and done, it was, "Vic, don't call us... we'll call you."

I could only laugh the following week when I turned on *Live Wire* and witnessed Todd Pettengill give his analysis of who had the best Powerbomb, Sid or Vader.

Maybe I should quit analyzing professional wrestling... and spin some 45s.

They just don't get it!!! ■

vince ONLINE

INTERVIEW

ONLINE HOST:
Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome... Vince McMahon!!!

VINCE:
This is Vince McMahon. I'm looking forward to talking with everyone in cyberspace. It's been quite a while since I've had the pleasure of joining everyone on America Online. I'd like to do it more often.

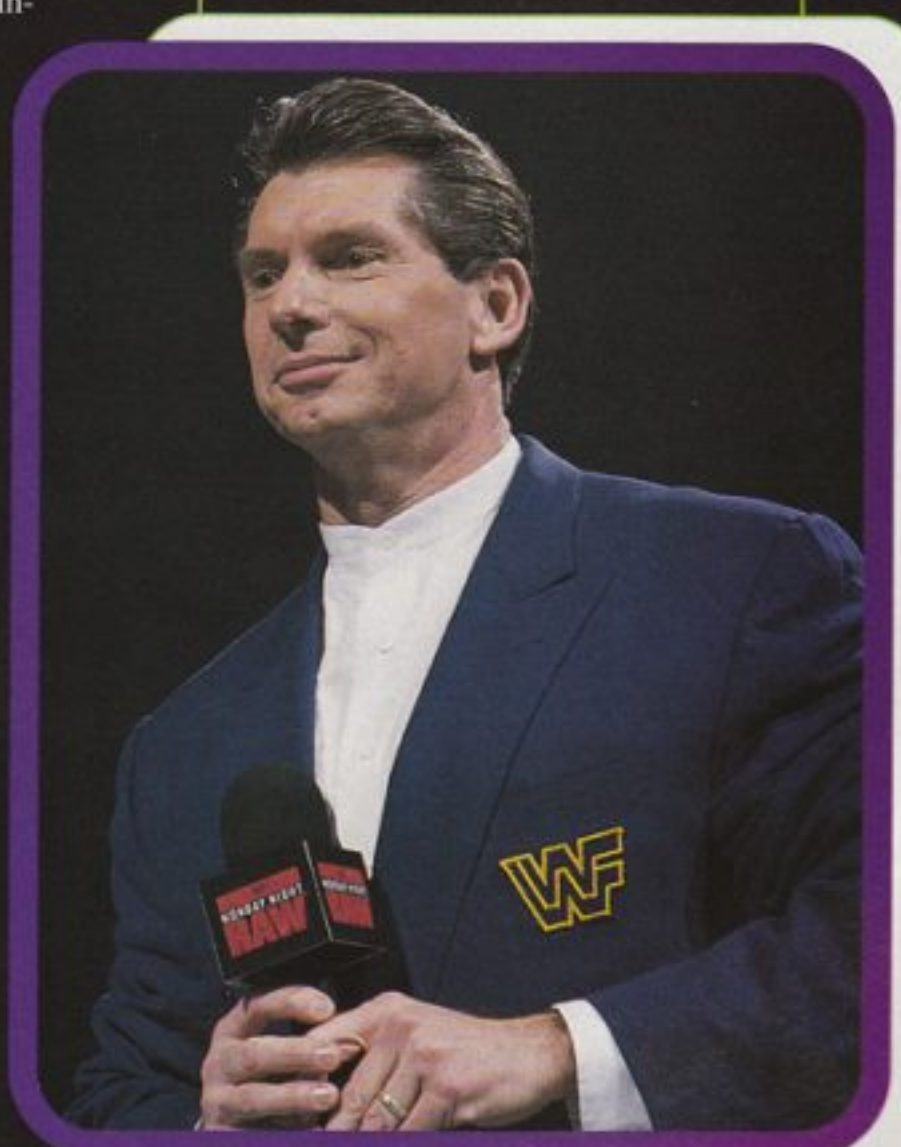
QUESTION:
Vince, where have you been?

VINCE:
I have chosen to perform other duties, such as producing and directing talent, and I'm taking a more active role in corporate affairs. That's why I have been curtailing my broadcasting activities. Although I must say I miss it.

QUESTION:
What do you think of the New World Order (NWO) and World Championship Wrestling (WCW)?

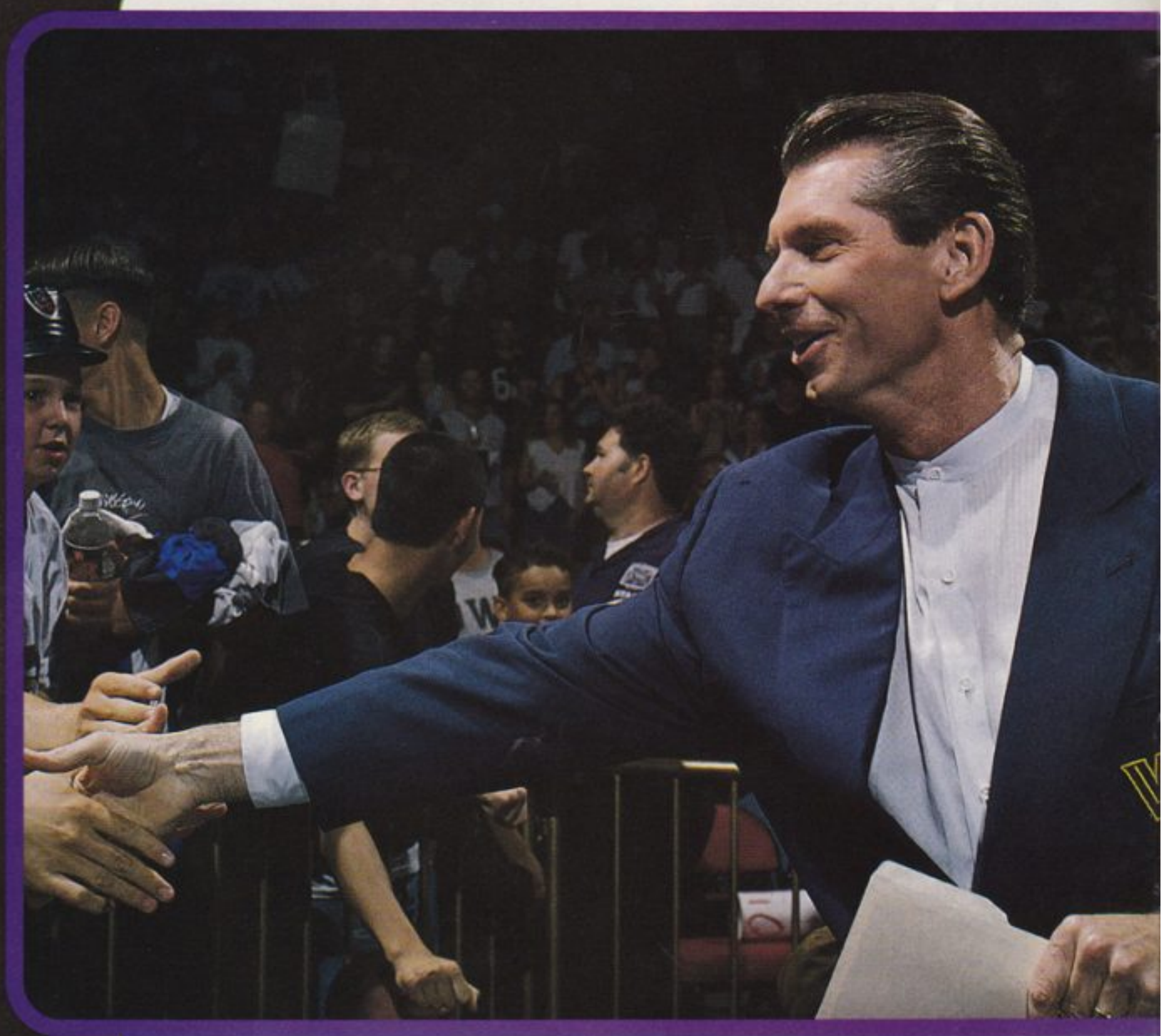
VINCE:
The WCW is an organization founded, of course, by Ted Turner.

Turner continues to deficit-spend quite like the US government. It seems as though the only thing Mr. Turner really cares about is Monday night TV ratings. He has pooled many of his resources dedicated to hurting the World Wrestling Federation. In the end, the only individuals he's hurting are fans because they have the opportunity to watch two shows at the same time. The NWO is an idea... by using former Federation superstars based on the concept of the World Wrestling Federation invading WCW. Turner very cleverly used Federation trademarks in an effort to perpetuate this concept. Nonetheless, the NWO and its existence is very successful for WCW. It's ironic that all the members of the NWO achieved their popularity here in the World Wrestling Federation.



QUESTION:
Why have you been losing all your good wrestlers? And what are you going to do about it?

VINCE:
Good question... quite frankly, even though we did a parody of Billionaire Ted, the reality of his resources is in fact what keeps WCW's engine burning. Ted Turner doesn't care if he can outspend his opponent to get what he wants. In this case thus far, he has been able to pay exorbitant amounts of



money to superstars who came to prominence first in the World Wrestling Federation. However, practically all our superstars are now under long-term contracts. This will prevent Ted Turner from this practice. Ted can now concentrate on attempting to make his own stars... something that he has never been able to do before.

QUESTION:

Mr. McMahon, what do you think of Eric Bishoff?

VINCE:

I don't know Eric Bischoff. I don't know what kind of skills he has. Although I must say that it does not take a genius to be able to pick Hulk Hogan's mind and spend zillions of dollars with multi-network backing to accomplish what WCW has currently accomplished.

QUESTION:

Mr. McMahon, is there any chance of

seeing Ultimate Warrior back in the World Wrestling Federation?

VINCE:

It's highly unlikely.

QUESTION:

What are your comments on Jim Ross?

VINCE:

Jim Ross appears to be a disgruntled employee with an ax to grind. I think I should deal with Mr. Ross in private.

QUESTION:

Is having *RAW* live every week in the cards?

VINCE:

Production expenses alone are well over six figures. Under normal circumstances, we attempt to record as many shows as possible, thus minimizing our expenditures. We do not have Turner's resources to lose millions a year and to spend over six figures every week on one show. We cannot match checkbooks, we must be as we always have been—more innovative, maintaining a stronger work ethic and never forgetting who brought us to the dance... the fans!

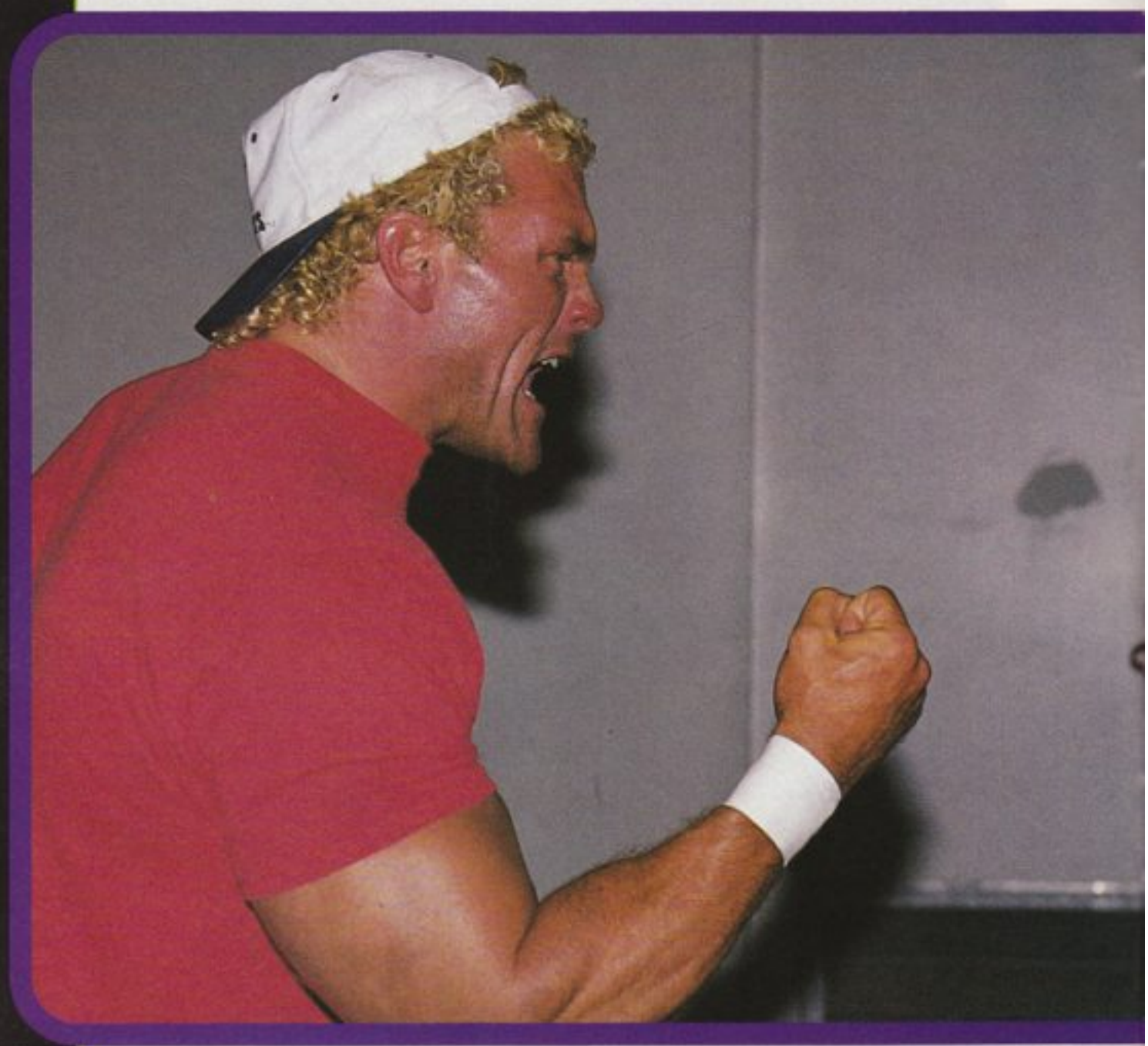
QUESTION:

Is there a deal between Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW) and the World Wrestling Federation?

VINCE:

The only deal between ECW and the Federation is that ECW, if they haven't

already, will be hearing from our attorneys as a result of their intrusion on our Pay-Per-View and live *Monday Night RAW* shows. As I recognize it, this is America. The ECW has just as much right to be in business as we do. I would appreciate it if they did not interrupt our activities to gain notoriety.



QUESTION:

Vince, what's happening with Bret Hart?

VINCE:

On September 30 in Madison Square Garden, it was announced that we are currently negotiating with Bret. Hopefully he will return to action at *Survivor Series* against Stone Cold Steve Austin. However, though Bret has been and continues to be under contract with the Federation, we have thus far been unable to coax him back to the ring.

I am hopeful that we will be successful at the *Survivor Series*. If in fact we are not successful in coaxing Bret back, I would extend to him the possibility of a front office position, the possibility of consultation, public relations or wherever he would like to pursue future activities. I am concerned that Bret has lost his competitive edge. Quite frankly, he will more than likely retire. Let's all keep our fingers crossed that he will return for one farewell match at *Survivor Series*.

QUESTION:

Do you feel that the World Wrestling Federation missed the boat by not capitalizing on the talent of the Mexican wrestlers as WCW has.

VINCE:

You might be right, I don't know. It's certainly an avenue that we will explore in the future.

QUESTION:

Is there any truth to the rumors of a live Federation show late on Saturday nights?

VINCE:

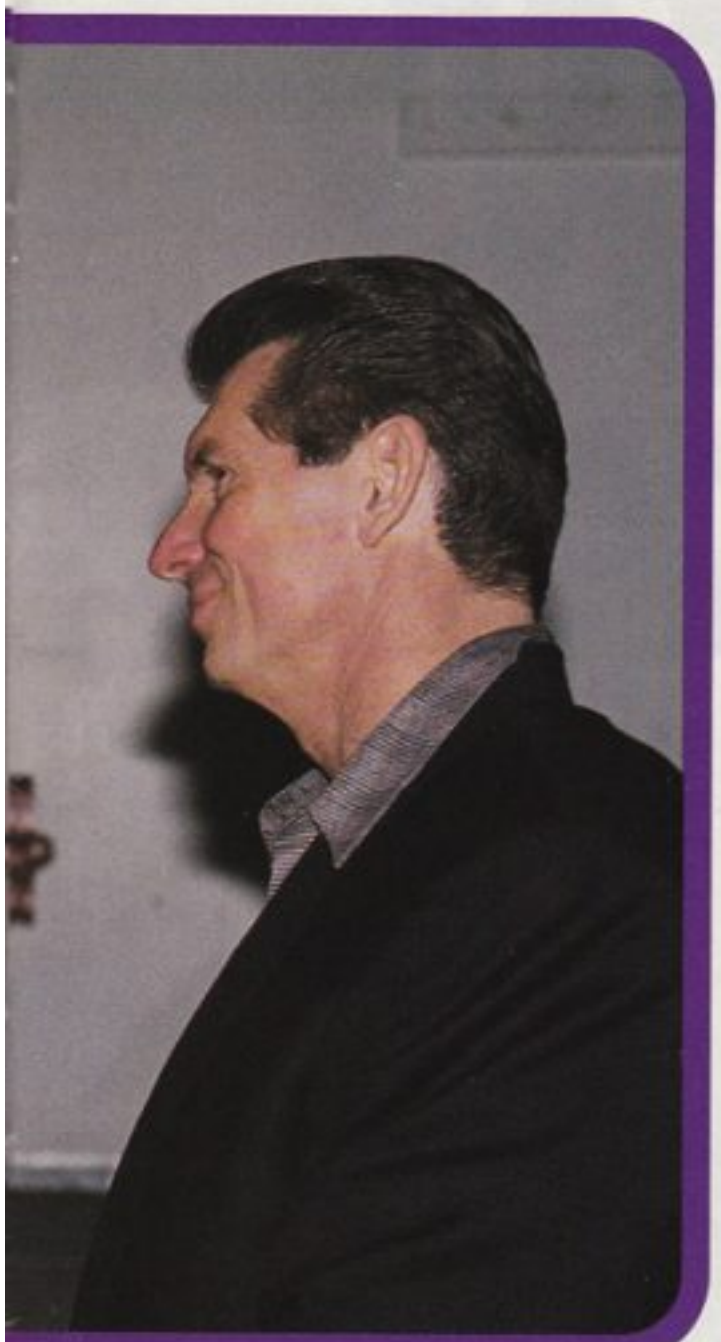
All things are possible here in the World Wrestling Federation.

QUESTION:

Will the Federation be launching a site on the world wide web and if so, how will it affect the AOL site?

VINCE:

Good question. The World Wrestling Federation will be launching a web site in the near future. This, however, will co-exist with and complement our AOL site. We believe we can do both AOL



and a world wide web site.

QUESTION:

Will Hulk Hogan ever be inducted into the Hall of Fame?

VINCE:

Yes.

QUESTION:

Who do you believe is the best wrestler today?

VINCE:

This will probably strike most people as unusual, but I would suggest the best wrestler in the world today is Stone Cold Steve Austin.

QUESTION:

Vince, do you listen to the reaction from the fans on the internet and on AOL?

VINCE:

Yes I do. I welcome both positive and negative criticism.

QUESTION:

Had you to do it over again, would you have done the "Billionaire Ted" skits?

VINCE:

Yes, I found the "Billionaire Ted" skits to be provocative, satirical and very adept at getting our message across in an entertaining fashion. Few people in media—or in life—have the tenacity to make fun of Ted Turner. We're not afraid of Ted... not afraid of his billions of dollars... or even the big bad wolf.

QUESTION:

Vince, what was your favorite *WrestleMania*?

VINCE:

WrestleMania III at the Pontiac Silverdome. Hulk Hogan versus Andre the Giant. Andre had been a protege of my father's... it was only fitting that Andre, as well as Hogan, would have the opportunity to make wrestling history. I can't tell you how proud I was of the performances of both individuals on that day.

It was a moment that will always be special for fans all over the world, as well as those of us inside the wrestling business. When I walked to the ring to the introduction in front of 93,000 fans all I could think about was my father and how much I would have wanted him to have been a part of that extravaganza.

QUESTION:

Vince, if you had to change one decision over the last year, what would it be and why?

VINCE:

There is no one decision that I can look back on in the past that was pivotal. The success of an enterprise such as the World Wrestling Federation is a cumulation of a lot of decisions. We don't claim to be the smartest... but we will work harder than anybody else. We have a deep abiding respect and love for the business that we are in and for our fans who enjoy that business. Hopefully, the cumulation of all our decisions in the past, as well as those we'll make in the future, will be decisions that will entertain and dazzle World Wrestling Federation fans all over the world even in the face of overwhelming odds, Billionaire Ted!

ONLINE HOST:

Thanks for joining us tonight, Vince McMahon! It's been our pleasure!

VINCE:

I would like to thank everyone for all their support and I would like to thank you for all your opinions. Hopefully, we can do this on a monthly basis. ■

YO, REMEMBER THAT GUY? IVAN PUTS

BY KEITH ELLIOT

Ivan Putski was fond of grabbing the microphone after a victory and shouting "Polish Power!" to the people. Interestingly enough, not only the Slavs in the audience cheered. When Putski wrestled, the Chinese, the Irish, Norwegians and African-Americans were also Polish and all were energized by Putski's unique tribute.

Putski was able to rally all Americans behind him because he truly believed in the land of opportunity. He was one of the last immigrants to pass through Ellis Island—a Polish boy whose family wanted to escape the horrors of World War II and start over in a land where opportunities seemed limitless. Ivan perpetuated his parents' dreams, building himself into a strongman in the gym, plowing over opponents in the squared circle, capturing the World Wrestling Federation Tag Team Championship and—after retiring—being inducted into the World Wrestling Federation Hall of Fame.

Privately, Putski would marvel at the adulation he received from the fans. He'd tell friends how he started off with nothing, hoping for little more than a life free from hunger and the oppressive dictatorships of eastern Europe. The huge ovations he received were more than he'd ever expected and if the fans were going to invest so much in Putski, the "Polish Strongman" vowed to never let them down.

He rarely did. In his earliest matches in the World Wrestling Federation, he was an awkward presence, wearing the style of cap popular with immigrant truck drivers and construction workers. But that was Ivan Putski, a regular working guy who chose to make a living in the wrestling ring instead of on the loading dock. Every guy with calloused hands in the arena understood this, and the athlete developed a bond with his followers that lasted throughout his career.

"Some wrestlers are deliberate," recalls a mat veteran whose career overlapped that of the Polish Strongman. "Putski was himself. There was noth-

KI
GREENBERG

ing fancy about him—even after he rose to the top of the World Wrestling Federation. He was always the same as he was when his ship docked at Ellis Island. And that sincerity shone through. A fan sitting in the last row in the arena could spot it."

But Putski's fame was based on more than his easy-going personality. He was one of the most powerful men to ever compete in the ring. "If I were to compare him to a 1990s competitor, I'd have to equate his talents with Mark Henry—the World's Strongest Man," says a longtime World Wrestling Federation employee. "Nobody even comes close."

Putski's might was legendary and it made him a target of every wrestler who had built a name on brawn. Former Olympic weightlifter Ken Patera tried snuffing out Polish Power, along with former World Wrestling Federation Champion Ivan Koloff—a native of Poland's mortal enemy, the Soviet Union—and strapping Jesse "The Body" Ventura. These were rarely scientific encounters. Putski and his rivals engaged in titanic tests of strength, exchanged powerslams and vigorous blows, and frequently drew blood. But more often than not, Putski triumphed with his celebrated "Polish Hammer"—Irish-whipping a foe off the ropes and then blasting the man with two swinging, interlocked fists.

In the modern World Wrestling Federation—where friends and relatives will turn on each other when a title is at stake—Putski would almost certainly be a regular challenger for the heavyweight championship. But the Polish strongman competed in a gentler era. He tended to befriend the champions and thus kept whatever appetite he harbored for the title contained.

Ironically, despite his individual talents, Putski achieved his greatest conquest as a tag team grappler, joining forces with Tito Santana—an immigrant from Mexico, who shared many of his partner's patriotic ideals. In 1979, the tandem captured the World Wrestling Federation tag team straps from the legendary Valiant Brothers, holding the belt until 1980 when the title switched to Afa and Sika, the Wild Samoans.

It was the championship reign with Santana, along with Putski's uncommon relationship with fans of every origin that earned him his spot in the World Wrestling Federation Hall of Fame. At the 1995 induction ceremony, he seemed as stunned as he was when he received his first fan letter and wondered aloud how a poor immigrant could have made it this far.

Today Putski remains in robust shape. He works out regularly near his Texas home where he has trained numerous wrestlers, including his son Scott who shares his father's propensity for muscling opponents down to defeat. Whether Ivan is pumping iron in the gym, walking down the street or shopping in the supermarket, fans stop to pay tribute and then scream out "Polish Powwwwwwer"! ■

THE FIVE GREATEST MATCHES OF ALL TIME!!!

It seems that every time I sit down at this very computer to bang out a story for the RAW magazine, I am leaving myself wide open to be ridiculed, chastised and outright RIPPED!!! But, you know what? Who gives a DAMN! This magazine is uncensored, and I'm going to call it like I see it—whether you agree with me or not! God, there's no place like America, but better yet... THERE'S NOTHING LIKE BEING THE CHIEF!!!

So, without further ado, this month I'm going to analyze what I feel to be the five greatest World Wrestling Federation matches of all time!

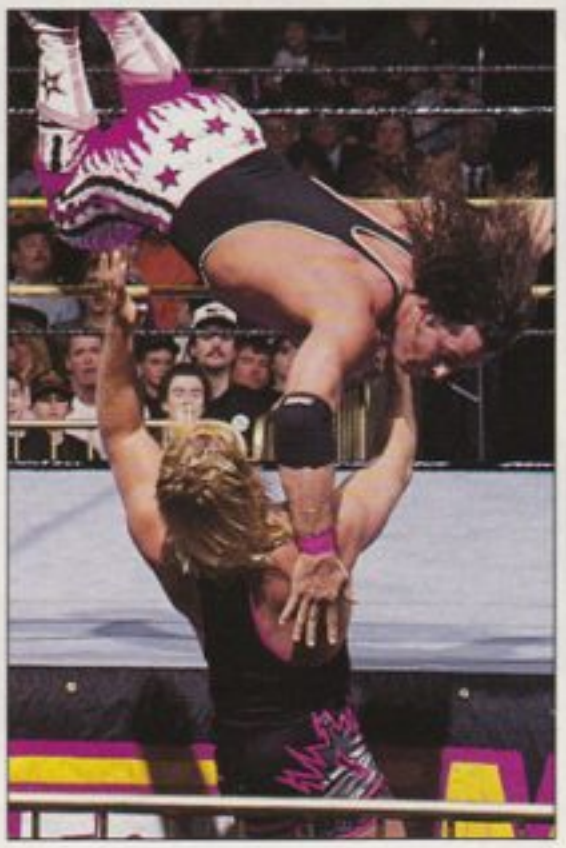
By Vince Russo

#5. WRESTLEMANIA X

BRET "HIT MAN" HART VS. OWEN HART

In my opinion, this brother-vs.-brother showdown was one of the greatest scientific matches of modern time. Having both been trained in the "dungeon" by their father Stu, Bret and Owen were the mirror images of each other. Their ring style was identical—from collar-and-elbow to finishing move! Nobody could sum up the contest better than commentator Jerry Lawler who said, "Owen knows what Bret's going to do, even before Bret does!" To all you "smarts" out there, that statement was definitely what one would call a "shoot".

Throughout the entire match, Bret and Owen exchanged move with counter-move, keeping much of the contest dead-even. Father Stu had to be proud as both his sons were making use of every bit of that "dungeon" education. In fact, if there was a down side to this match, it may have been that it appeared to be almost "too" mechanical. The fact is, you had two technicians out there, with the same style and the same philosophy, who were each wrestling an opponent who knew the other one better than he did himself!



One of the true highlights of this match came in the way of ring "psychology", something which many fans take for granted, without really appreciating the art. Toward the end of the match, Owen gained the advantage by injuring Bret's left knee. From that point on, in Owen's mind, one thing became clear: Bret was now the prey and he (Owen) was the predator. Like a master of his craft, Owen capitalized on the advantage, by concentrating on and working the knee until Bret could barely go anymore. You just don't see

that kind of ring psychology often displayed in this sport anymore. Many times you'll see a wrestler hurt, and his opponent simply goes on to the next move without ever capitalizing on the injured part of his opponent's body. It's psychology. Hurt a body part—then work it.

Ironically, this match ended when Bret failed to execute a victory roll. Throughout the entire match, it became more and more evident that one miscalculation could be deadly and for the "Hit Man" it was.

The win propelled Owen to new heights in the World Wrestling Federation and started a war with Bret that still goes on to this very day.

#4. LADDER MATCH I

WRESTLEMANIA X

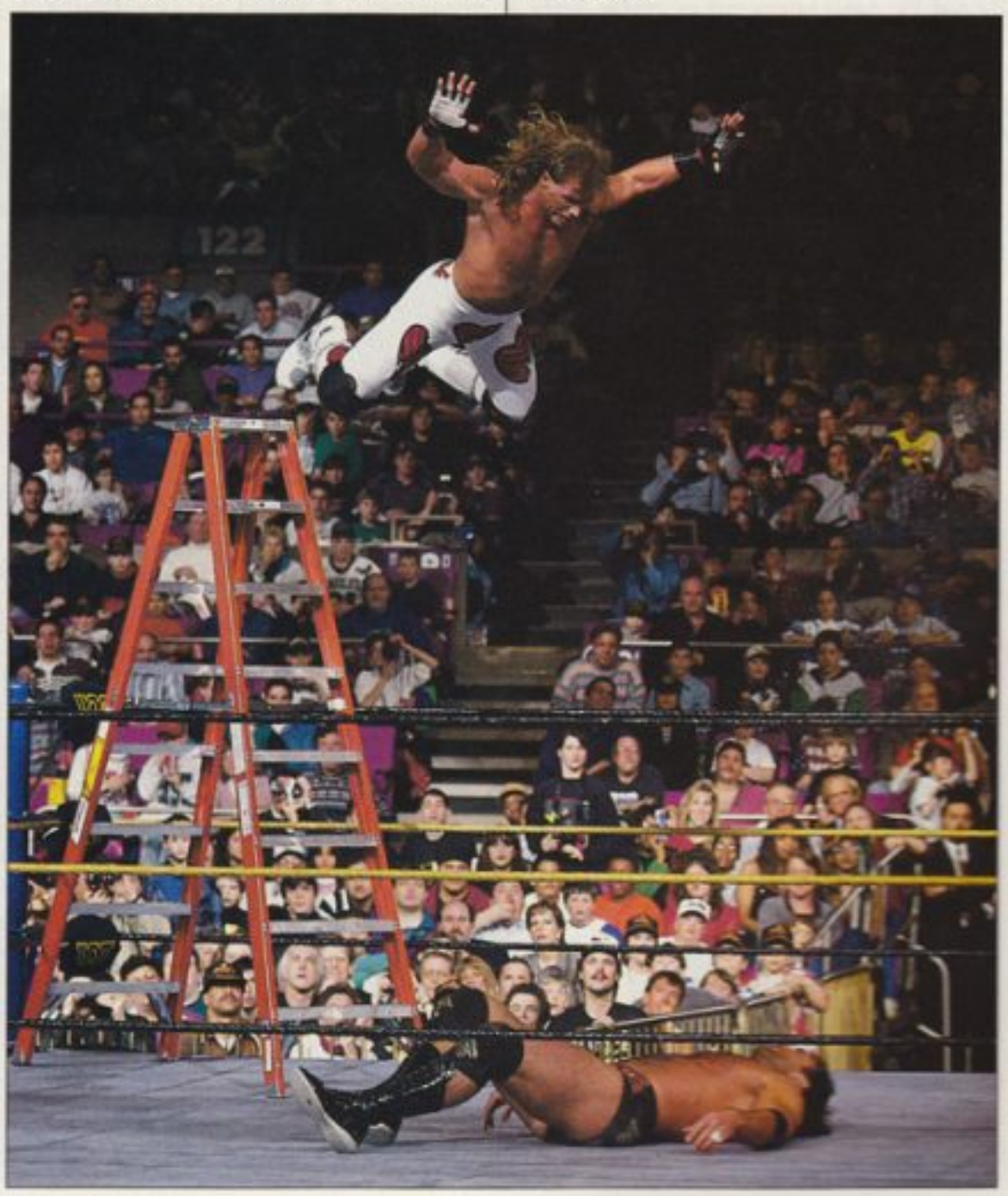
RAZOR RAMON VS. SHAWN MICHAELS

A true spectacle! Whether you are a "smart" or not, if you don't realize the danger involved in this match, then you just don't understand the wrestling business!!! The bottom line: There is no controlling a 10-foot steel ladder. It falls when—and how—it wants to. That's why, going into this match, neither Razor nor Shawn knew what to expect. Although wrestlers don't usually think about getting hurt going into a match, these two HAD TO BE THINKING ABOUT IT! Whether you want to believe it or not, their bodies were at risk. Either combatant could have easily sustained a career-ending injury.

For me to get into every high point of this match would take a book. Believe me, Shawn and Razor did everything—and anything—you could possibly do with a ladder. One spot, however, stands out as being truly spectacular. When Shawn dragged the ladder to the corner of the ring, then climbed the ropes, mounted the ladder and pushed off, crashing down on Razor—METAL and BONES—in my mind, it was nothing short of suicidal!!! Sure, Razor was at risk, but Shawn's body was at the mercy of the ladder. I mean, has anybody out there ever fallen off a ladder? Hello? IT'S NOT FUN!!!

In my opinion, this match made both Shawn Michaels and Razor Ramon. Both competitors were already great, but in a matter of 30 minutes they became legendary.

For years to come people will be talking about this match and believe me, you won't see many like it EVER again. Quite frankly, because there just aren't that many wrestlers ALIVE capable of pulling it off!!! It was a masterpiece and ask any art collector—masterpieces aren't painted everyday!



#3. LADDER MATCH II

SUMMERSLAM '95

RAZOR RAMON VS. SHAWN MICHAELS

Never in my wildest dreams—and I've had some wild ones—did I think that the *WrestleMania X* ladder match could be topped... but at *SummerSlam '95* it was, for more reasons than one!

First of all, the pressure was so great on the two participants going into the match because NOBODY thought that they could possibly top their *Mania* extravaganza! In that match they had done EVERYTHING imaginable! NOTHING, absolutely NOTHING could top it!

Or so we thought.

There was one small detail that separated this match from the one at *WrestleMania X*. One stipulation that gave Razor and Shawn the opportunity to do the impossible—top the original. Prior to the bell, Federation officials warned both competitors that they COULD NOT—IN ANY WAY—USE THE LADDER AS A WEAPON.

So now not only was the pressure on to top their first encounter, but with this new stipulation they were forced to get creative!

AND GET CREATIVE THEY DID!

The high spots came fast and furious, one right after the other. Apparently, both men must have had this rematch in their minds even before the original took place because they brought out an arsenal of "tricks" that they hadn't used in the *WrestleMania* encounter!

Among those unforgettable high spots were: a Shawn splash from the top of the ladder, followed ever so nicely by a moonsault off the rungs and, as part of the Razor contribution, a vicious EDGE of the Heartbreak Kid from the steps of the metallic monster! AND if that wasn't enough, there was the show stopper—the introduction of a SECOND ladder into the match!!!

#2. IN YOUR HOUSE

SEPTEMBER '96

SHAWN MICHAELS VS. MANKIND

I had the privilege of sitting in the first row (the same seat, actually, that Sandman was kicked out of earlier) to witness what was "almost" the single greatest match in the history of the Federation! Unlike Owen/Bret at *WrestleMania X*, there was nothing technical about this match—WHATSOEVER!

This brawl was based on relentlessness and resilience. Both warriors just kept coming at each other, doing whatever they had to do to gain the W. To say the match was "out of control" would be an understatement. Mankind and Michaels were putting their bodies—and careers—on the line, spot after spot after spot!

Jim Ross may have said it best when he described this match as a "genuine walk through hell for the World Wrestling Federation Champion". Mankind pulled out all the stops—along with his own hair—in an attempt not only to beat but cripple Shawn Michaels. But somehow, some way the proud pitbull just kept coming! It was the most aggressive Shawn Michaels that this editor has EVER seen. The Heartbreak Kid just has that magical way of being a chameleon. He can adjust his ring style based on who his competitor is at the time. In this case, there were times in the match when the Federation Champion was more Mankind than Mankind himself!!!

What can I say about the table spot that hasn't already been said. It will simply be talked about forever. Again, if you don't understand the danger, then you don't understand the business. You're talking about 600 pounds of flesh and bone being driven through a wooden table. If you can figure out a way to control that while ensuring your safety at the same time, PLEASE let me know!!!

#1. *WRESTLEMANIA III*

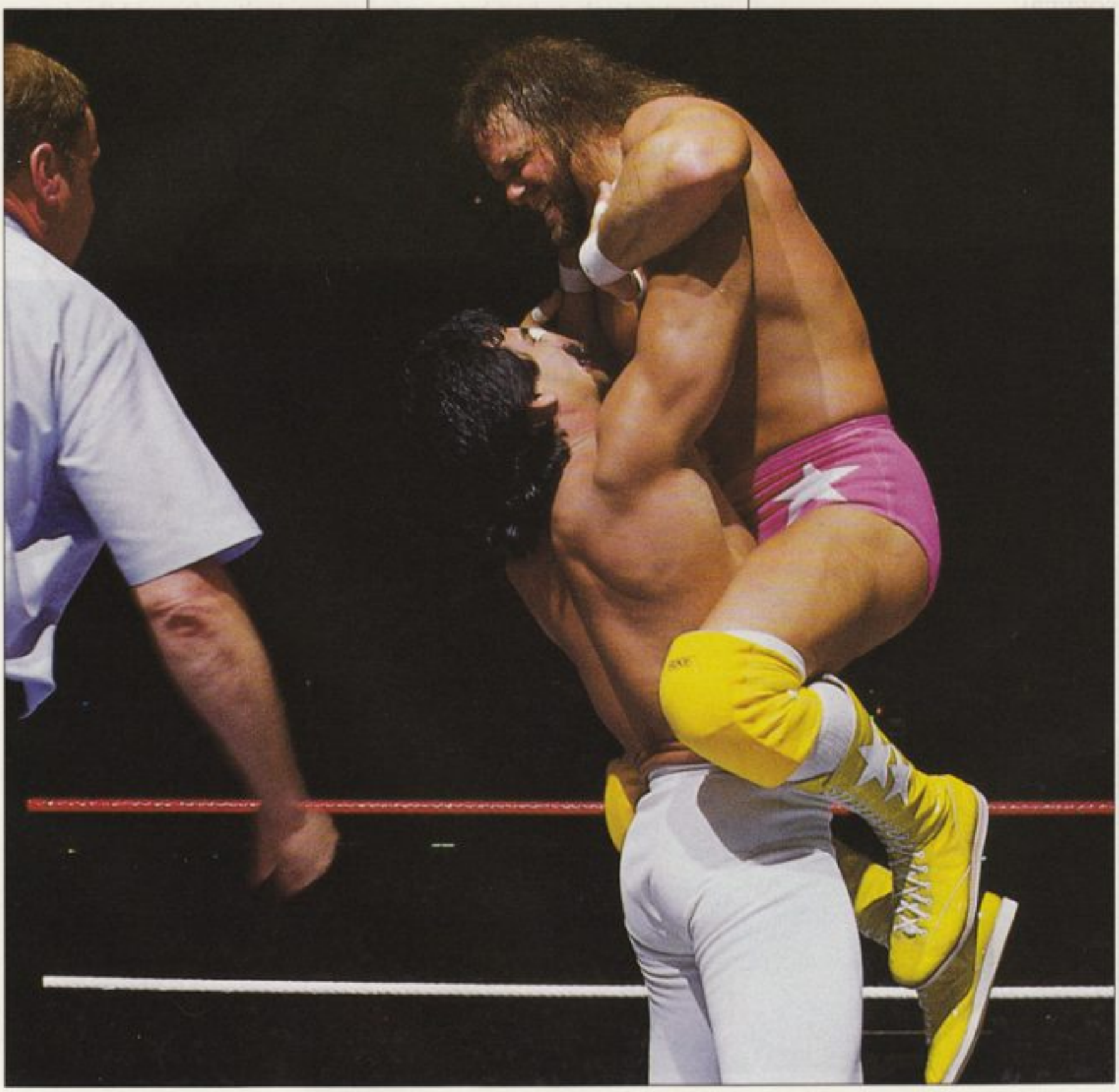
RICKY STEAMBOAT VS. RANDY SAVAGE

I went back, I looked at the tape again and I'm still convinced... THE GREATEST MATCH OF ALL TIME!!! Maybe it was all the false finishes, maybe the emotion, maybe it was the 93,000 screaming fans or maybe even GEORGE "THE ANIMAL" STEELE—who the hell knows!!! What I do know is that, almost 10 years to the day, this ring classic still stands out as the best EVER!!!

In their prime, Macho Man Randy Savage and Ricky Steamboat were—POINT-BLANK—two of the best. I don't care which one jumped to another organization or which one dragged us into court! This is the *RAW* magazine, so let the truth be told!!! This match WAS the best—with simply TWO of the best!!

In my HUMBLE opinion that is, of course.

(To get a complete blow-by-blow analysis of the Steamboat/Savage classic, turn to "The Night The Belt Changed Hands" on page 56.) ■



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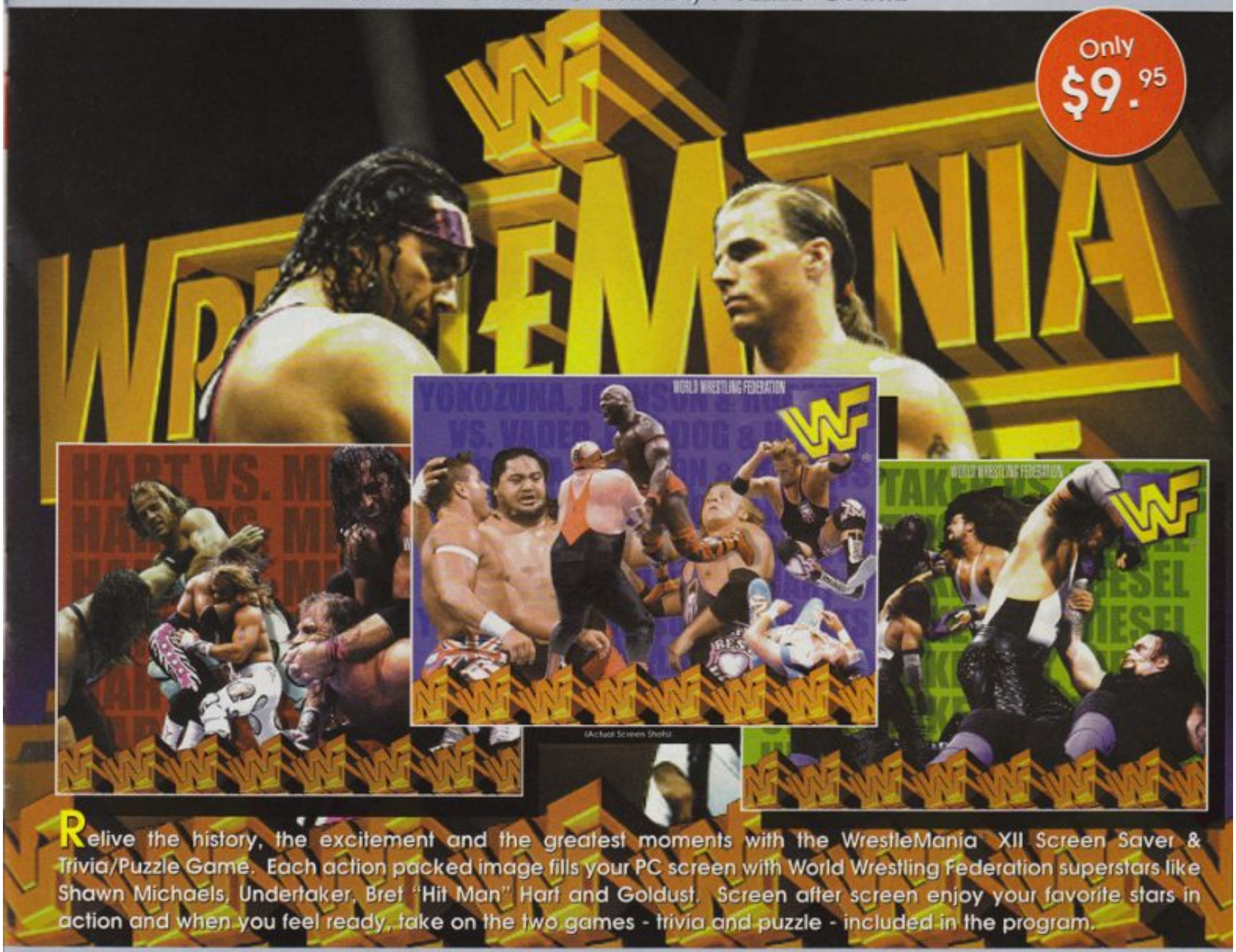

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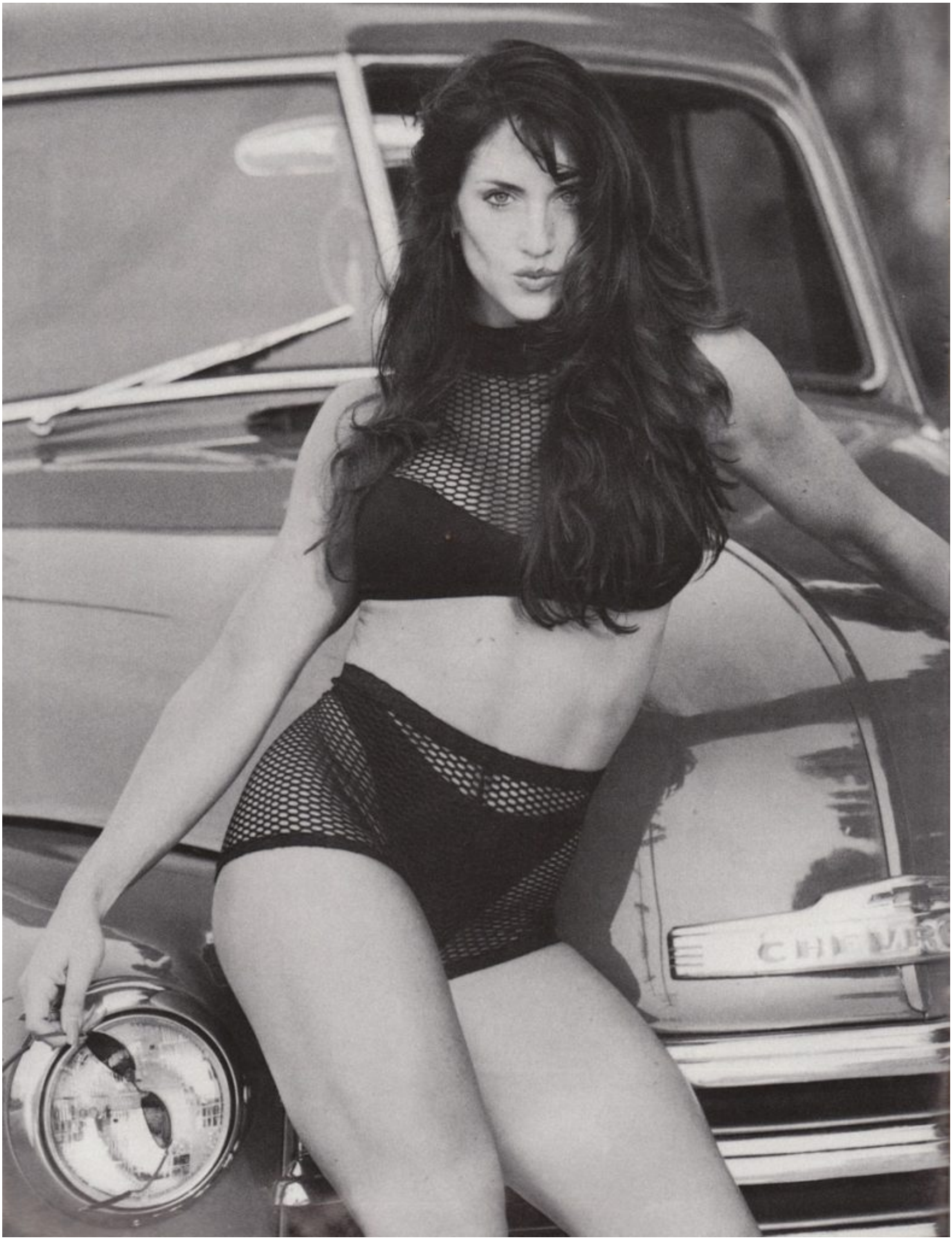
WF SLAMMY 1997 AWARDS

As a part of the *WrestleMania XIII* weekend, the World Wrestling Federation will honor its Superstars by presenting the prestigious "Slammy Awards" to those personalities who have been selected by *you*, the fans!

There will be nominees in such categories as "Superstar of the Year". All of the winners will be chosen by the fans, and here's all you have to do:

In the February issue of the *World Wrestling Federation Magazine* you will find a list of the "Slammy Award" categories and the names of the Superstars who have been nominated for each award. Then, either by using the ballot in the magazine or by calling the "Slammy" option on the WF "900" number or by voting conducted by means of the WF's site on America Online, YOU will determine the Slammy Award winners!

The World Wrestling Federation "Slammy Awards" will be presented at a gala banquet in Chicago, Illinois, during the WrestleMania XIII weekend. All the Superstars will be there! You can be there, too! Information on how you can attend the "Slammy Awards" will be announced in World Wrestling Federation television programming.


CHEVROL

HEIDI T. ROTH

Heidi is a personal trainer, aerobic instructor and master fitness presenter who currently resides in Los Angeles. With a Bachelor's degree in Exercise Physiology from the University of California, Heidi's competitive nature led her to be a contender in the American Gladiators, and she has coached the 1993 National Hip Hop Dance Champions.

The Perfect Choice?

What Hunter Hearst-Helmsley gave up...

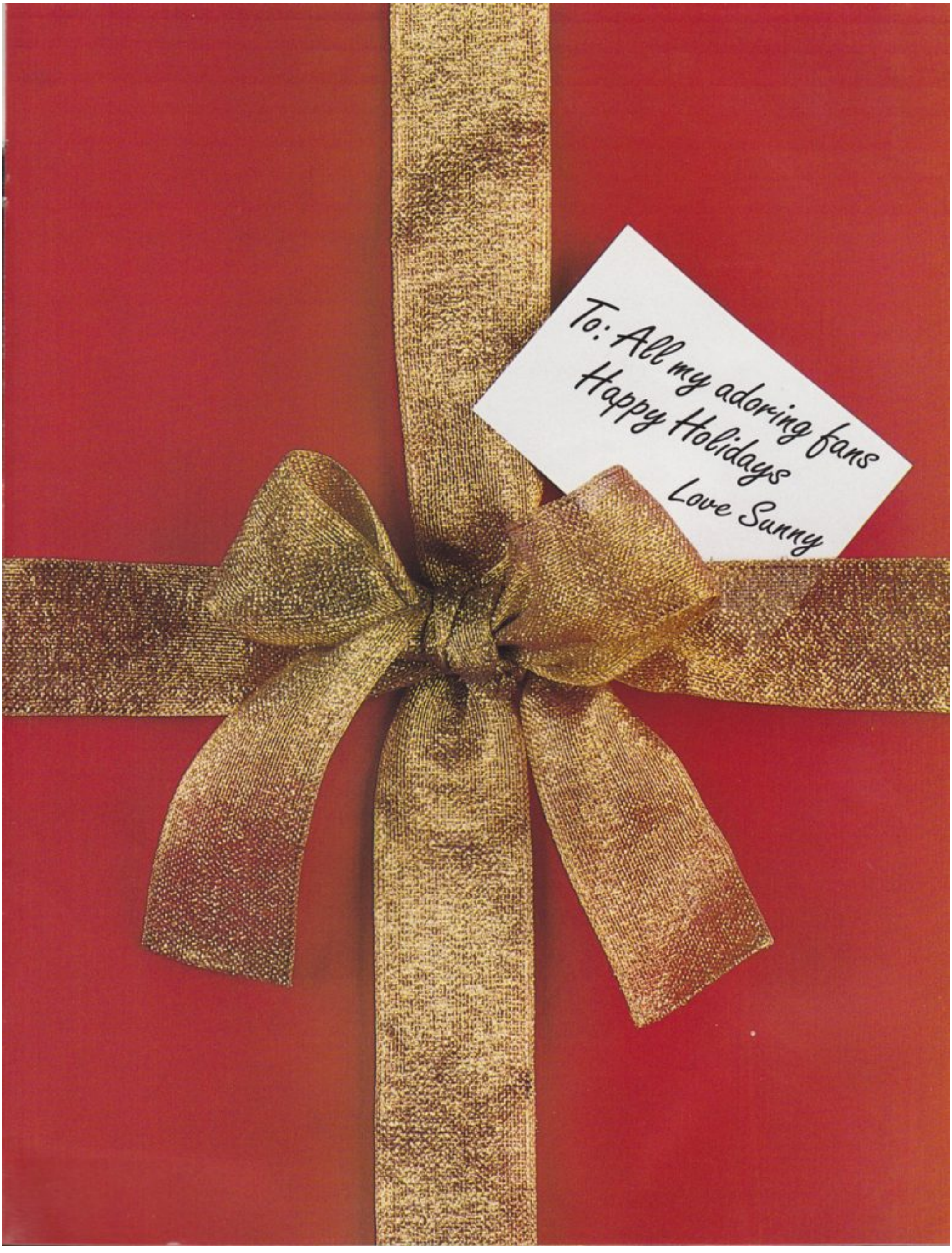
for the wisdom of Mr. Perfect.

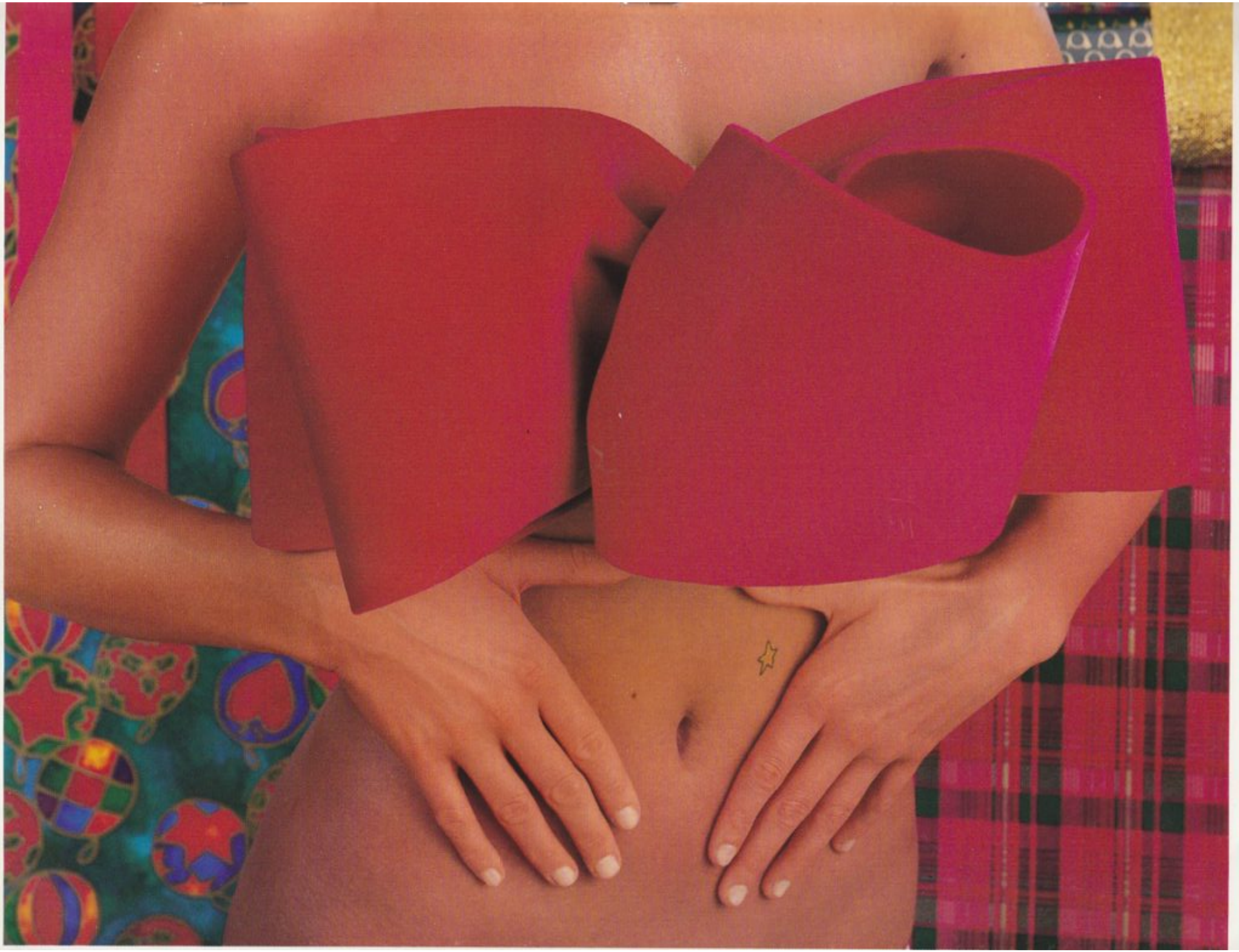
The Perfect Choice?

ALEX TAYLOR

Alex was the *Penthouse* Pet of the Month in August 1994. She has entered and won numerous beauty pageants of all stripes, including her recent title as Miss Nude World. Alex also represented New Hampshire in the Miss U.S.A. pageant. She is so well-versed in this subject that she trains other girls in how to enter and win pageants. Alex is fluent in Spanish and has appeared in Spanish-language television commercials. She has a degree in communications and hopes to appear in mainstream films. Her modeling work has included appearances in catalogues and swimsuit magazines.

Alex Taylor, Penthouse Pet, Photo Compliments of *Penthouse* Magazine, Division of General Media Communications Inc. All Rights Reserved.


To: All my adoring fans
Happy Holidays
Love Sunny

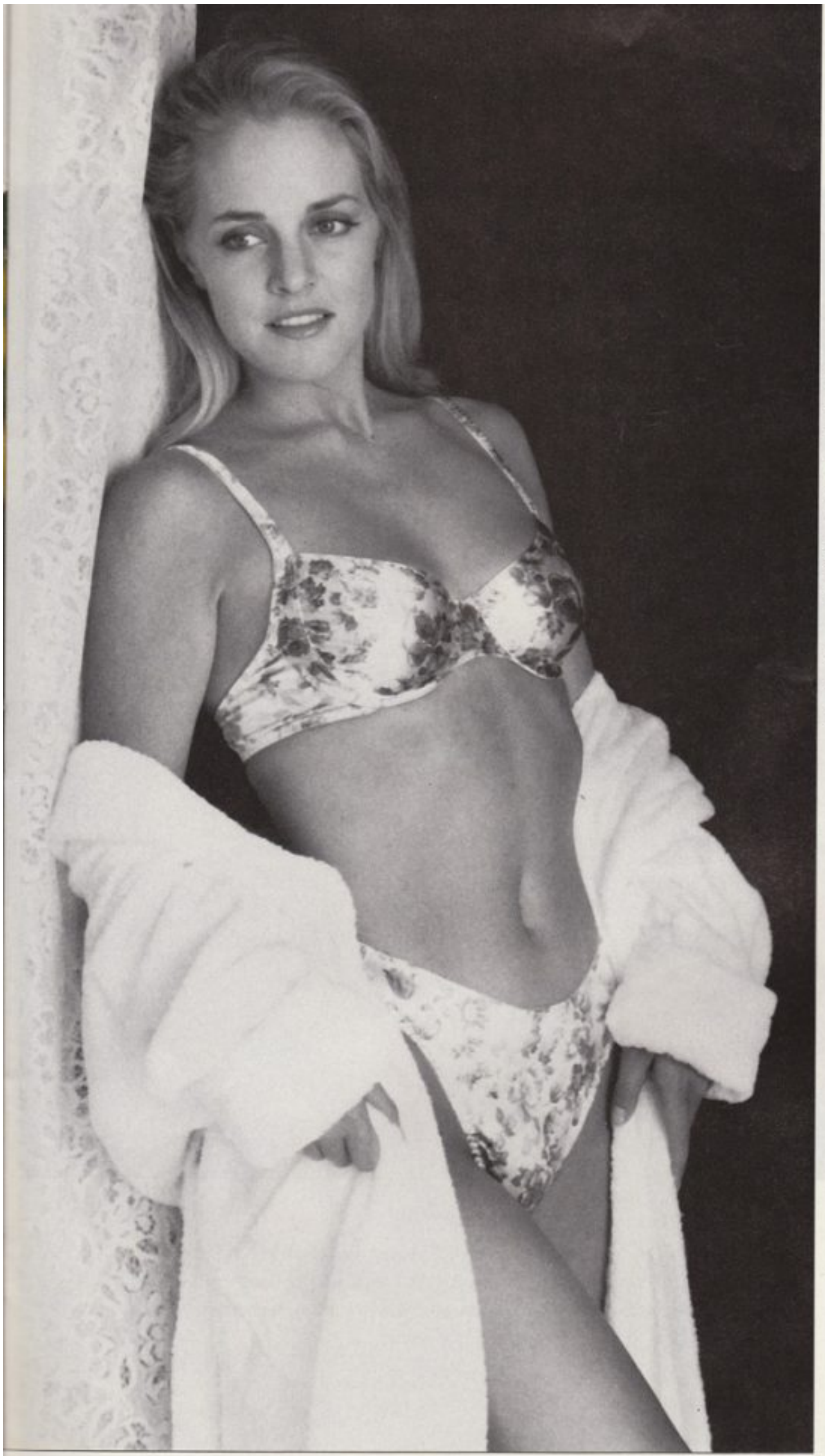


JULIE BERNARDE
From Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Julie works as a model and has had some exciting jobs in movies (where she served as a stunt coordinator), commercials and calendars. When she has free time, Julie enjoys water sports, rollerblading, dancing and cooking.

The Perfect Choice?

REGINA EVANS
Born: Atlanta, GA
Age: 27
Status: Single
Height: 5'7"
Weight: 125 lbs.
Eyes: Brown
Hair: Blonde

Hobbies: Horseback riding, cooking and working out. A graduate of West Georgia University, Regina currently works in Atlanta as an analyst in Transportation and Logistics. For fun and entertainment, she spent three years as an Atlanta Falcons cheerleader.



DANIELLE FRANKE

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Danielle worked as a dancer for the Milwaukee Mustangs Arena Football team for two years. A World Finalist in the American Dream Girl Challenge, Danielle currently serves as the National Spokesperson for the All-American Beverage Company.

Danielle has had several parts in commercials and movies and she enjoys shopping, rollerblading, kick-boxing and Tae Kwan Do.

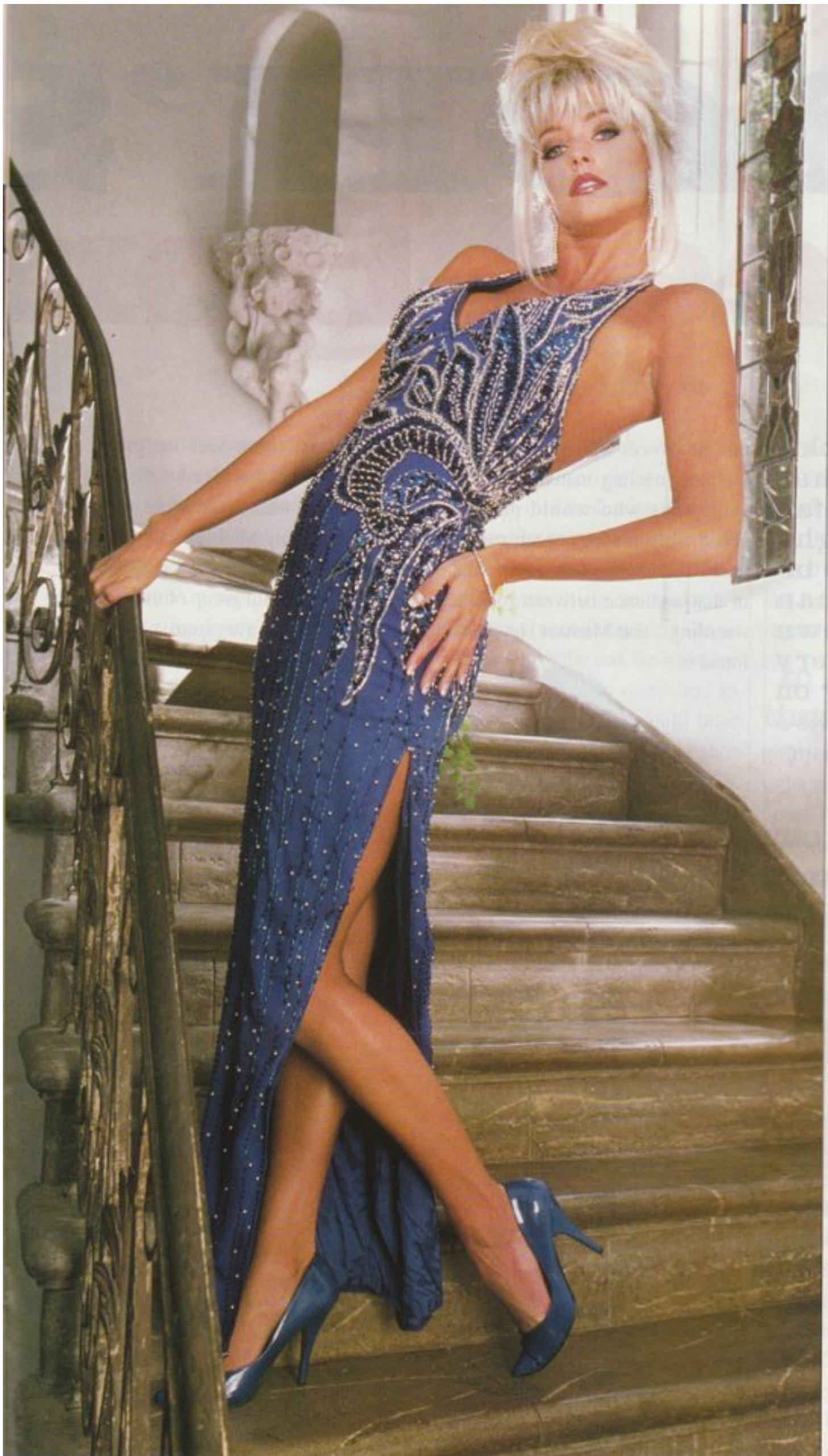
The Perfect Choice?

Emerald Heart, *Penthouse* Pet, Photo Compliments of *Penthouse* Magazine, Division of General Media Communications Inc. All Rights Reserved.

EMERALD HEART

Height: 5'8" Hair: Blonde Eyes: Green

The January 1996 *Penthouse* centerfold, Emerald was born in Canada and is fluent in both French and English. Emerald is a trained kick boxer and also loves to rollerblade and swim. She is currently involved in many *Penthouse* promotions and plans to take acting lessons in the future.



ELIZABETH HILDEN

The *Penthouse* Pet of the Month for June 1995, Elizabeth was recently named the 1997 Pet of the Year! Hailing from Independence, Missouri, Elizabeth has also been featured in a *Penthouse* video, while making appearances on *House Party* and on *The Jerry Springer Show*. She also keeps busy by touring the country as a featured dancer. Describing herself as a homebody, Elizabeth likes to bowl, roller skate and hang around the house watching videos and eating pizza. Her future plans include breaking into professional show business.

Elizabeth Hilden, Pet of The Year 1997, Photo Compliments of *Penthouse* Magazine, Division of General Media Communications Inc. All Rights Reserved.

DOK'S
Sweet Hon

BY BILL BANKS

As a young rookie reporter who has been a wrestling fan since the age of eight, it was an honor to interview the man whom I had grown up watching every Saturday morning on television. When I arrived at the World Wrestling Federation studio, Dok Hendrix was already waiting for me. Sitting in the "Green Room" with the legend once known as Michael "PS" Hayes, the story of the Fabulous Freebirds was about to unfold in its entirety—uncut and uncensored. You are about to take a trip back in time to an era called "Baddstreet USA". For those of you who don't remember, that's "Baddstreet, Atlanta, GA"!

For years many fans have wondered how the trio known as the Fabulous Freebirds was born. Three young men—Michael Hayes, Buddy Roberts and Terry Gordy—were looking to break into the business of professional wrestling and they needed a name that fit their wild style of living. At the time, Hayes was a 14-year-old kid who put together wrestling rings in his spare time. As time went on, he noticed that the crowds who filled the arenas for the wrestling matches were the same fans who would pack the house when a rock concert came to town. There was a union somewhere in that audience between rock and wrestling... and Michael Hayes soon found it.

The fact is, there was no great wrestling mind involved with the name that the team could agree on. It was quite simply Michael, Terry and a car radio that conceived possibly the most successful group of men the squared circle has ever seen.

s Home
ne... BADDSTREET USA!!!

"Terry and I would drive up and down the road listening to Lynyrd Skynyrd all day... time after time after time," Dok said, during lunch. "And after listening to the song 'Free Bird', it took a little coaxing and urging from me but Terry finally agreed. Thus, the Fabulous Freebirds were born."

"In that day and time, being 16 or 17, attempting to make your mark in a profession that was dominated by men who had families to feed wasn't easy," said Dok. "We needed something to make us distinctive... something to make us stand out above the rest. So we came up with the lights, the music and an exciting entrance that would later become a trademark. But at that time, not many promoters liked that kind of thing. I remember one promoter said to us, 'You boys on them marijuana pills or somethin'?'. That was definitely the kickoff of the Fabulous Freebirds."

Shortly after the birth of the Freebirds, they gained fame very early—too early—in their careers by landing in the World Wrestling Federation for a brief stint in the early 80s. Gordy, Roberts and Hayes were barely of drinking age then! The boys were catapulted into the limelight for a short time, but soon the cliche "too much, too soon" loomed over their heads and they left as quickly as they had appeared. Dok described his early days in the Federation with Terry and Buddy as filled with parties and drinking—something he clearly regrets doing today.

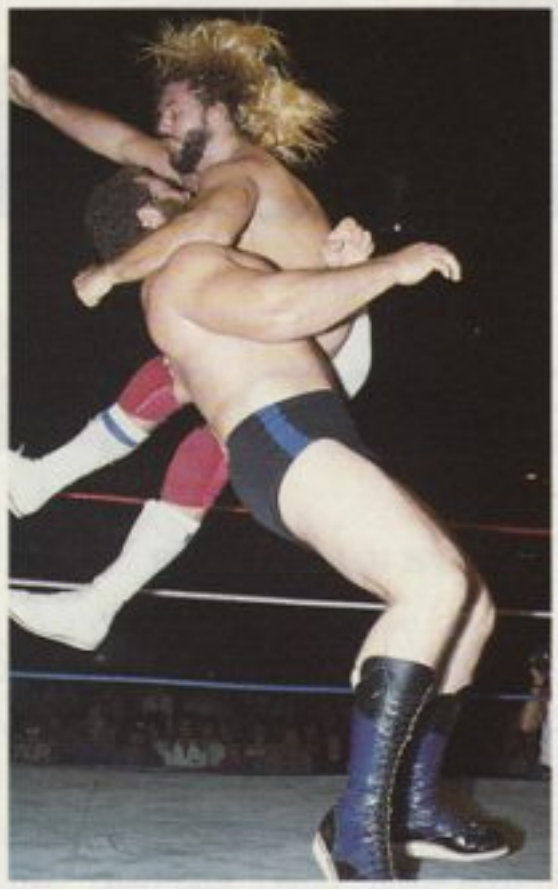
"In that day and time, being 16 or 17, attempting to make your mark in a profession that was dominated by men who had families to feed wasn't easy," said Dok. "We needed something to make us distinctive..."

"We thought that our @$#% didn't stink," Hendrix said. "I was oblivious to what Vince McMahon was doing at the time. Vince knew where he was going with the Federation and he wasn't kissing our asses at all... it was all too much for us. I even blew a $250,000 recording contract I had made with Elektra

Records. If there was one mistake I wish I could undo it would be the departure that we made abruptly from the Federation. We thought no one could tell us what to do, so we hightailed it out. You live and learn."

After leaving the Federation, the Freebirds journeyed back down south to the very place that had gained them stardom before they ventured up north. At the time, World Class Championship Wrestling (WCCW) was a hotbed in Texas. You had the famous Von Erich family, the returning Freebirds and stars from the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA) all competing in one place.

WCCW was known in its early days to pack the houses. Fifty thousand people once jammed the Texas Stadium to see the David Von Erich tribute show, a feat not even the Dallas Cowboys could accomplish. Sadly, the tribute shows for WCCW became all too familiar with the deaths



of the Freebirds' nemeses, the Von Erichs. Fritz, the father of the family, ran WCCW until the pain of his sons' deaths became too much to handle. Some say the passing of Jack, David, Mike, Kerry and Chris Von Erich brought down the once glorified WCCW.

"If there was one thing I could say about the Von Erichs, it would have to be that they [the children] didn't realize what they had," Hendrix said. "Fritz knew exactly what he had with the organization. He nurtured it successfully for a long time, while people made fun of him for pushing his sons so hard. It was obvious that while we were there, it was like a college rivalry. Once the sons had opponents like us who were their age—young—and could kick their asses, people came out in droves."

After the downfall of WCCW, the Freebirds went their separate ways, which at the time was a shock to all their fans worldwide. According to Dok, there was slight tension between him and Terry, but the underlying factor of the break-up was professional goals. Buddy, who dipped in and out of retirement, got involved in construction. Terry, on the other hand, started to become an international wrestling star in Japan—something he became comfortable with at the time—and Hayes entered the NWA, whose stars he had been accustomed to seeing in Texas. Unlike Gordy, Hayes carried on the tradition of the Freebirds with Jimmy "Jam" Garvin, a man who was a longtime traveling buddy of the former trio and was considered the unofficial "fourth" Freebird.

"Jimmy was a very tenacious man... who reminded me of Buddy in many ways," Hendrix said. "He started out young and was trained by people like Eddie Graham and Ronnie Garvin in Florida. Jimmy would sometimes sleep in the famed "Hart Dungeon" up in Calgary—it was a way of life for him. He and I were probably closer as far as views on life than me, Terry and Buddy were. We saw things much the same way."

In the NWA, three Freebirds became two, but the winning ways still stuck with "PS", who won the organization's tag team title with Garvin on numerous occasions. No matter whether it was four, three, two or even one remaining Freebird, the audience could expect a fantastic time when they wrestled. According to Hendrix, they were the "Master Puppeteers", superstars who could make the fans love them or just !@#$ them off for the fun of it.

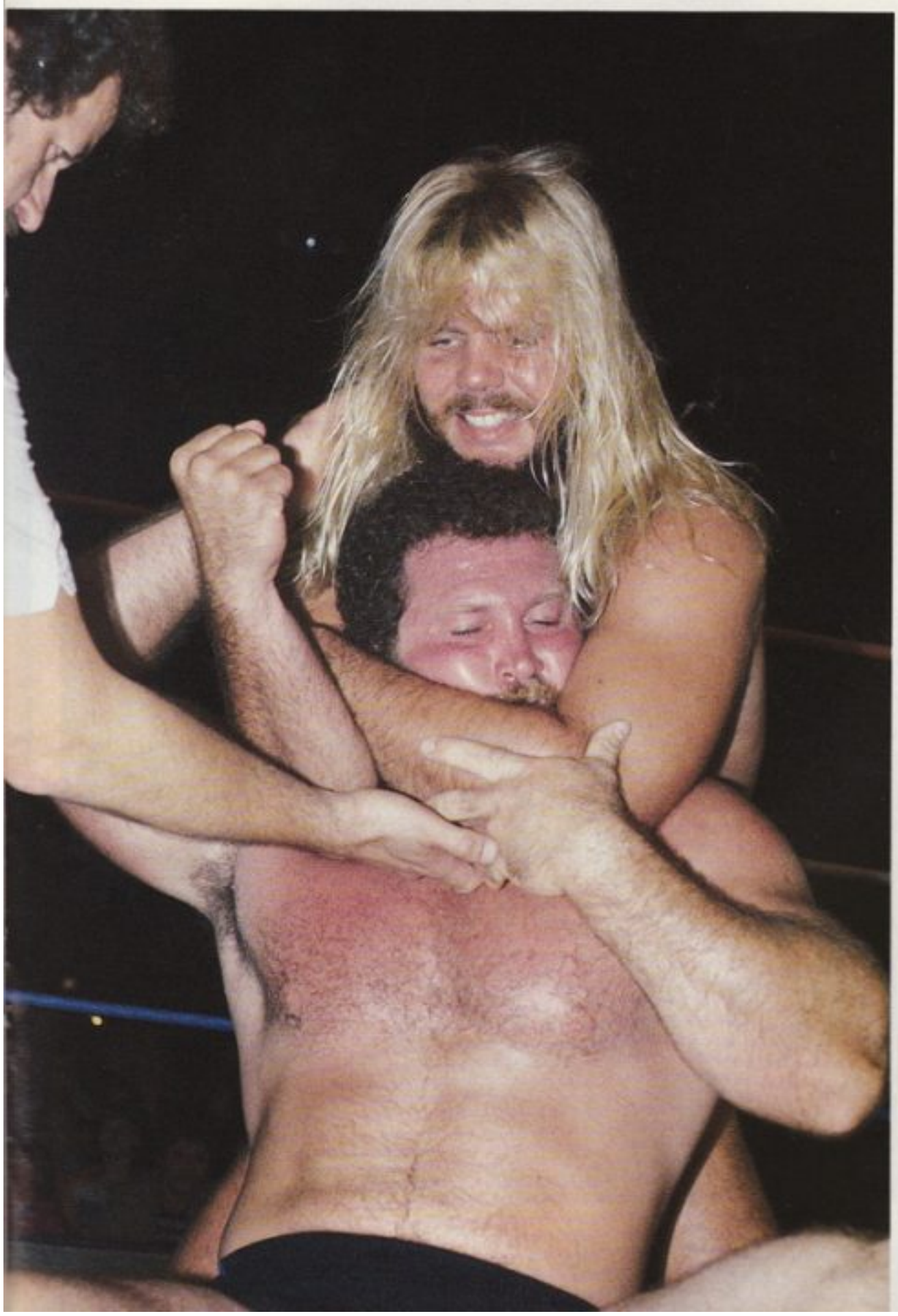
Then the tune of "Baddstreet USA" abruptly ended...

Fans wondered where the "leader" of the Freebirds went. Across the country, dirt sheets and 900 numbers

went ballistic trying to track down Hayes. Did he quit? Did he give up? Would there ever be another playing of "Baddstreet USA"? The truth was a sad tale for many fans to hear and was equally hard on Hayes to stomach.

"I was wrestling Marc Mero one night in some little town in Georgia and I woke up the next morning and realized that I had a 'different' kind of pain," Dok said. "I always had pain, especially after wrestling that many years, but this was a pain that was new and I had never felt it before. I went about a month without reporting it... thinking it would go away, but it didn't. The doctors told me I had a hamstring pull and told me to exercise. I wrestled for another few months and went back—they told me the same thing. By this time, getting in and out of a car would make me cry in pain."

And then the worst fears for Hayes were about to become reality...



After months of living with the unbearable pain, Hayes finally decided to find out what was REALLY wrong with him. The results of an MRI confirmed what was in the back of the Freebird's mind the whole time—and it was far worse than any of the misdiagnoses that were coming from the physicians. Hayes learned that he had a herniated disc in his back and another that was pinching a nerve... so much for that hamstring-pull theory.

The day before he was to have major surgery to repair it, his back completely blew—doctors had to take Hayes into the hospital on a stretcher because he couldn't even move. But the good Lord had other plans for him and the operation was a success.

"That's why I disappeared for all that time," Hayes says. "After the surgery, I still tried to wrestle here and there, but it just wasn't the same. I'm still trying to get back in shape and recover to where my back was before. But there are some days when I still can't even get out of bed."

Faced with the possibility of never stepping boot inside another ring, Hayes realized that it was time to move on to another calling—out of the ring and away from the ropes. Thus, Dok Hendrix was born. He knew that he wasn't coming back to the Federation to wrestle... that obviously wasn't going to happen. If Michael "PS" Hayes sat at a commentator's table, everyone knew something wild would happen. There were disadvantages to having Hayes at an announcer's booth, so changing to Dok was just the cure for the Freebird.

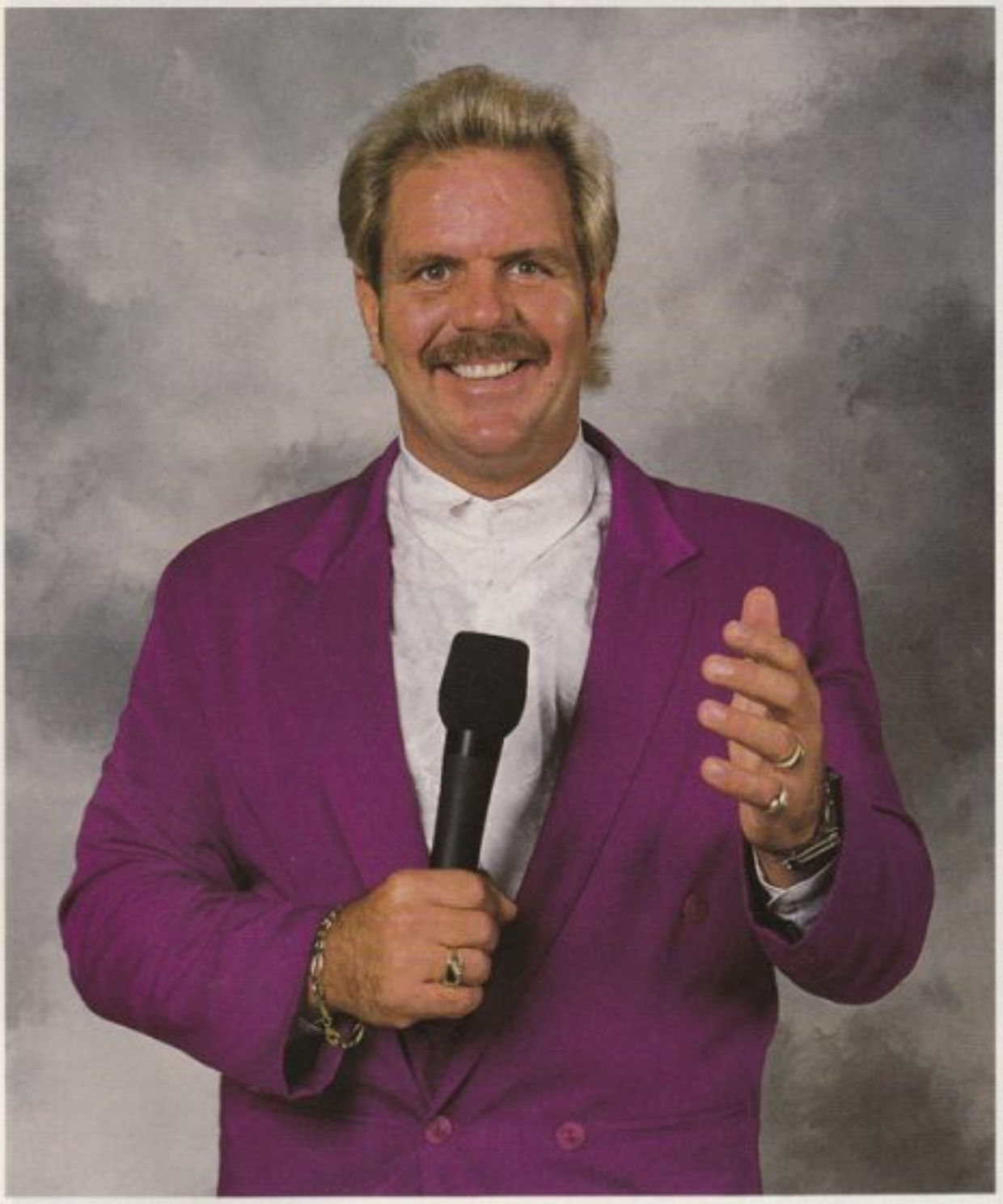
"The hardest thing I have EVER done in my life was cut my hair," Hendrix said. "I had long hair since I was 14 and it meant a lot to me. I had to go through a lot of barriers to keep my long hair... but I knew I would have to do it. There are two personalities inside me—there is Dok Hendrix who loves his life of wrestling and is part of something great, and then there is Michael Hayes."

No matter how much hair he cuts off his head, Dok and "PS" are still considered one and the same to millions of people. You don't need to look much furthur than last March at Madison Square Garden for evidence of that fact. As "Baddstreet USA" blared through the arena, 20,000 fans roared with delight when Dok was introduced as the special guest ring announcer that night. It was then and there that he realized one thing... the fans never forget. In the back of their minds, they wanted to look into that ring and see Dok with Terry, Buddy and Jimmy by his side. It wasn't enough to have the music and the lights... the fans wanted the complete package.

"To be honest, I miss it. I miss the crowd and the adrenaline," Dok said. "I miss it because I knew I was such a master at it. Will that reunion ever happen? Hmmm... never say never. As long as there is smoke, there is always a chance of fire. There wouldn't be a drawback of putting the 'Birds back together... and you know, it will be the 20th anniversary in 1997 of the Freebirds. I think we would owe it to ourselves and the fans to have one more match together. But if it doesn't happen, thank God for what I've had. I still talk to Terry, Buddy and Jimmy when I can. Buddy came to the *King of the Ring* weekend, and we hung out together afterward. I talk to Jimmy when I can because he is a pilot for [a commercial airline] and his schedule is hard on me. I see Terry all the time."

For now, Dok is more than happy to continue his on-screen duties with the World Wrestling Federation—hosting shows such as *Challenge* and *Live Wire*. He loves his on-screen ego, and "Handsome" Dok Hendrix is someone who still gets a kick out of entertaining people. But when the cameras shut off and the sun goes down, it's a whole different story.

"When I get through every night and I put on my jeans and I'm home in Georgia, I'm Michael Hayes," Dok said. "There's always gonna be that wild-ass rebel in me that I'm never going be able to get rid of...a Freebird. A Fabulous Freebird FOREVER!" ■



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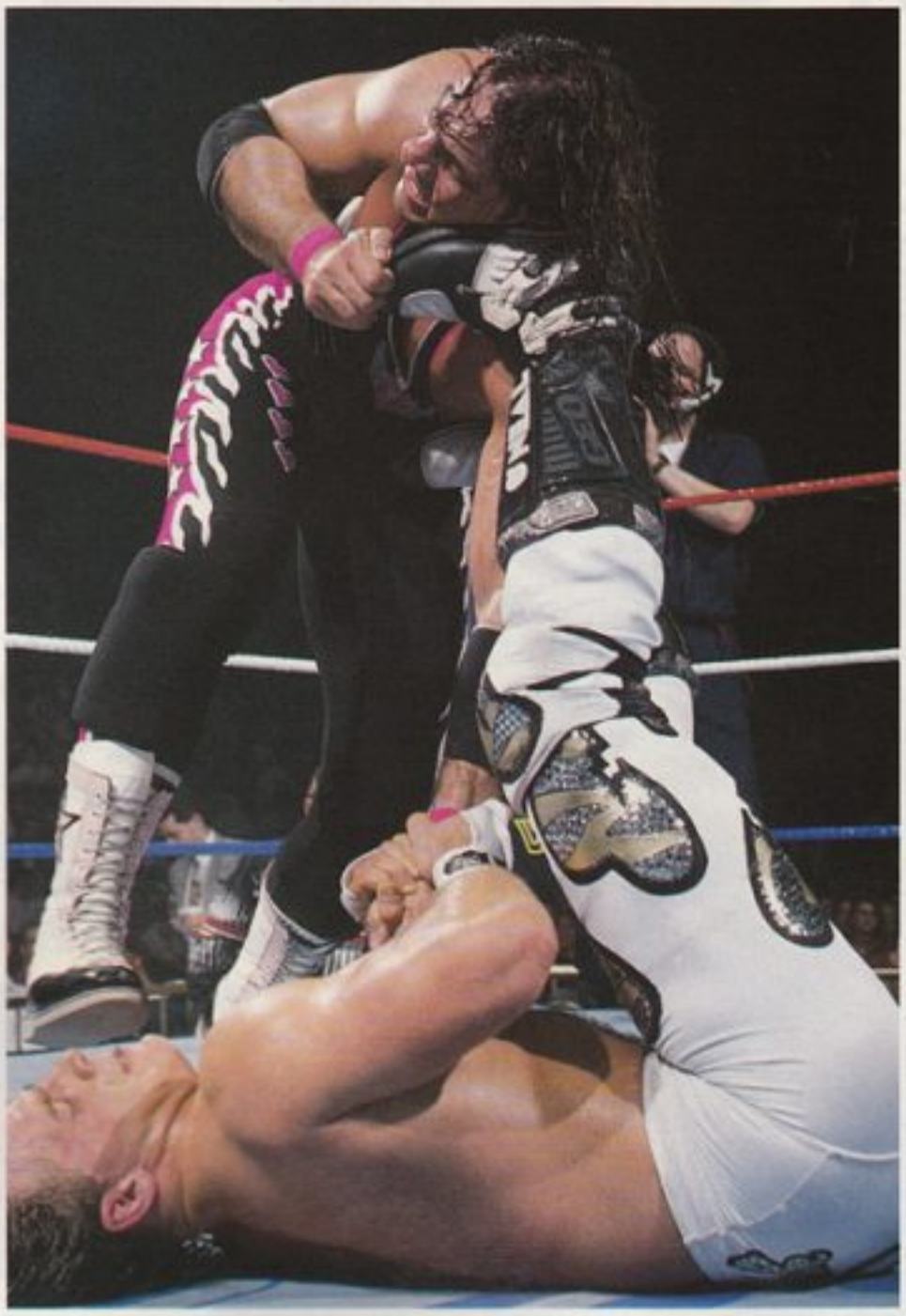
Is Planet WF Big Enough For Both Shawn and Bret?



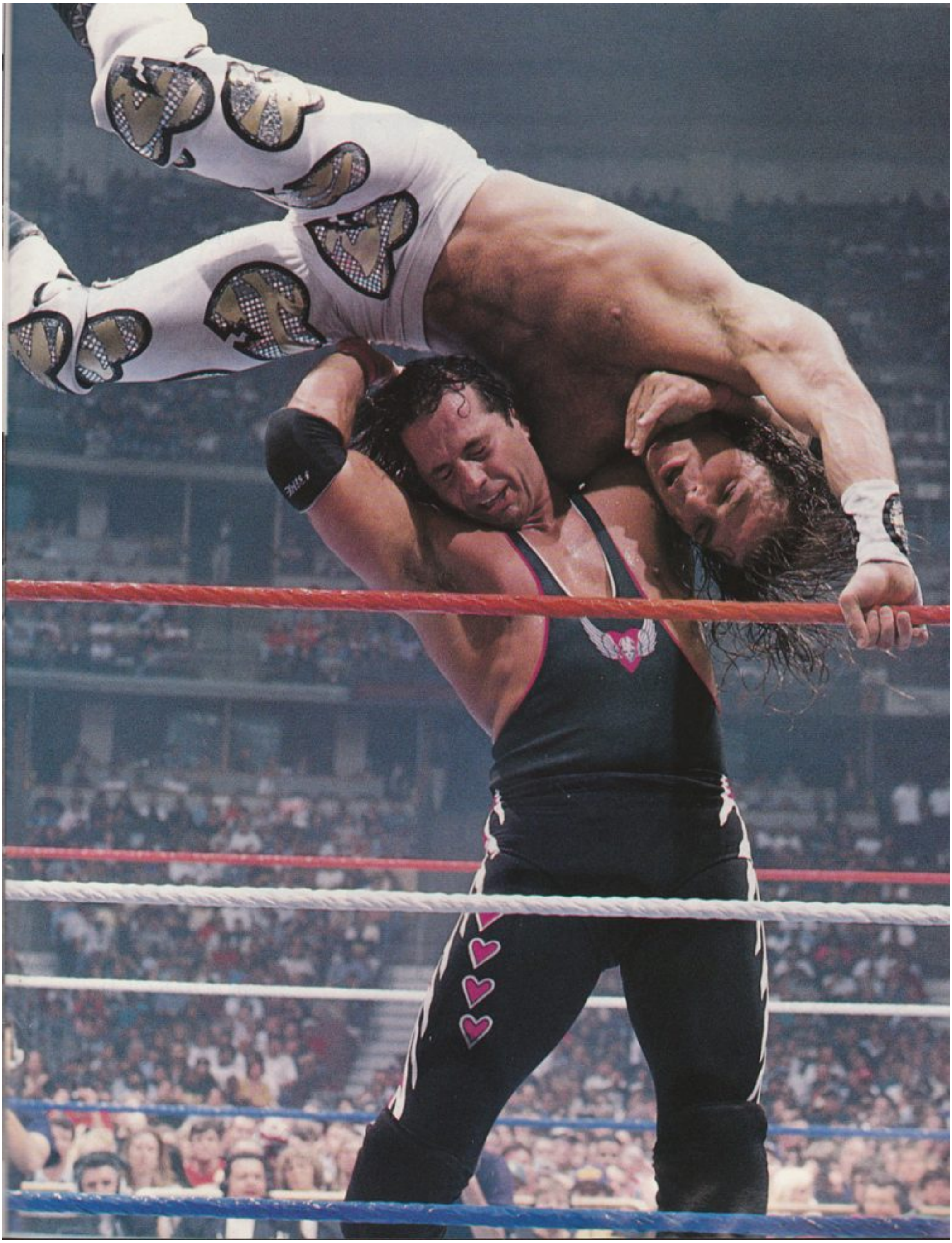
"I accept the challenge of the best wrestler in the World Wrestling Federation... and at the *Survivor Series* I will face Stone Cold Steve Austin."

—Bret Hart, October 21, 1996
Monday Night RAW

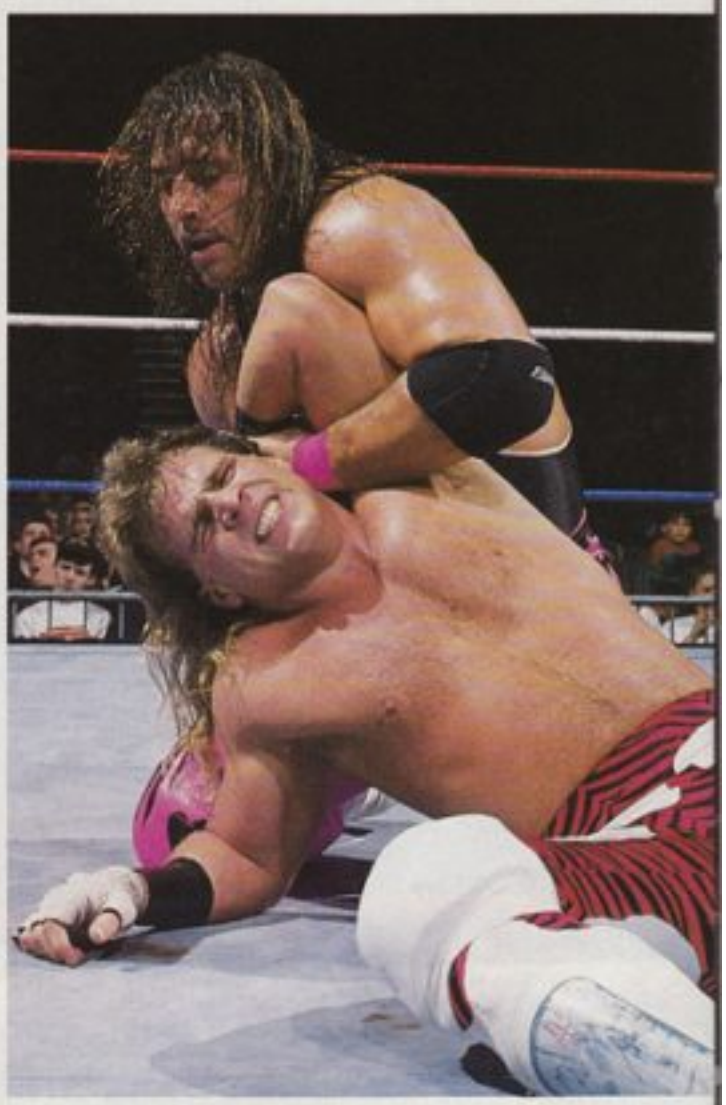
I had never missed a live taping of *Monday Night RAW*. As the editor of all Federation publications, it is both my duty and my responsibility to be at each and every one. Ah, but that's BS! I could find excuses not to go—kid's sick, wife's having an affair, dog ate my homework—you know, that sort of thing. The "REAL" reason I never missed a live taping of *Monday Night RAW* is BECAUSE I NEVER WANTED TO! I've been a wrestling fan for over 25 years—I NEED MY FIX! I NEED MY STONE COLD! I NEED MY SUNNY! I NEED MY FEDERATION TV!!!

Unfortunately, on Monday night, October 21, I was forced to miss. No Stone Cold. No Sunny. No FEDERATION TV!!! I had a special *Survivor Series* section due for the *New York Daily News* and my deadline was approaching faster than a speeding Brian Pillman bullet!!! Of all the nights to miss! The long-awaited return of Bret "Hit Man" Hart.

Now, I've got to tell you something. I consider Shawn Michaels a friend. I've worked closely with Shawn over the past three years and, both as a performer and a person, I respect him tremendously. Especially since he became the World Wrestling Federation Champion. Unless you've worked for this company, you have no idea of the strains, demands and expectations put on the Champion by the powers-that-be at TitanSports. I mean, I can even remember a time when they literally locked Shawn Michaels in a room for three hours to autograph a plaque! Yeah he makes his money, but the workload put on him is mountainous! In my opinion, maybe not even worth the money! But with a smile on his face, Shawn has answered the call of the Champion—TIME and TIME again!!!



On the other side of the ring, former World Wrestling Federation Champion Bret Hart has carried that same load on his back—only THREE TIMES OVER!!! A true role model and hero who has survived a business where money-eating egomaniacs have just about made his "kind" extinct—stomped 'em out... and killed 'em! A real man's man, the kind of father that many wish they could be. A man who doesn't have to demand respect... he just gets it! An honest man in a deceitful man's game... and a friend.



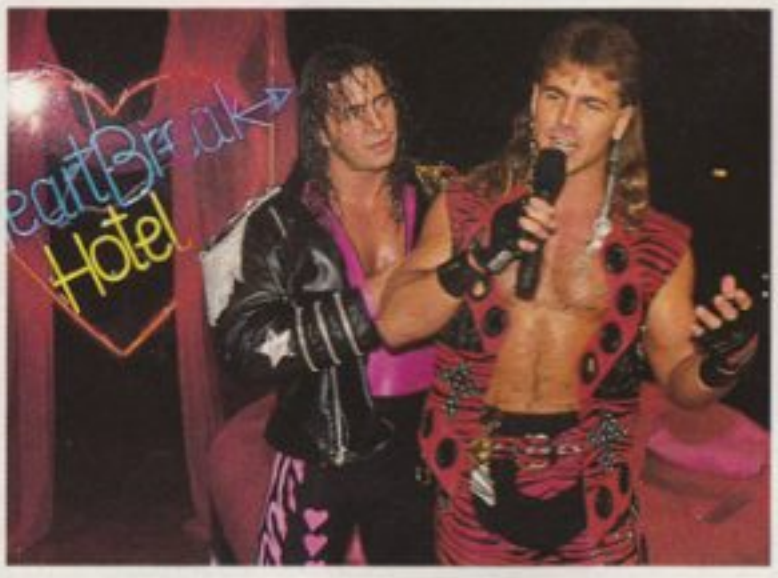
As I sat in front of my crystal clear Mits that night on October 21, I have to tell you, Bret's comments regarding Shawn Michaels bothered me. No, not the one about the dancing or even the one about the "girlie" magazine. The comment that troubled me the most was the one that came from Bret's heart.

"I accept the challenge of the best wrestler in the World Wrestling Federation... and at the *Survivor Series* I will face Stone Cold Steve Austin!"

I don't know why, but that comment just ate away at me. For Bret to say that Steve Austin is the best wrestler in the World Wrestling Federation tells me that Bret doesn't respect what Shawn does INSIDE the ring. Forget *Playgirl*, forget the strip tease, forget the showmanship—I'm talking about taking a shot at what Shawn does best... and that's WRESTLE! I've got to ask myself, why wouldn't Bret put over Shawn's wrestling ability? Jealousy? Perhaps. Envy? Maybe. Or does Bret truly believe in his heart that Shawn Michaels IS NOT the best? And if that's true—if Bret doesn't believe that Shawn is the best—then what does that say for Bret? Shawn defeated him at *WrestleMania XII*, remember? Is Bret saying that he was not beaten by perhaps "the Best" at the time?

At this point you're probably asking yourself, "All right, Russo, where are you going with this?"

You know what? I don't know where I'm going! All I do know is that something's gotta give here!!! I think that just about everyone on the face of God's green earth (thank you, Shawn) would agree that Shawn and Bret are the two best wrestlers in the business today. It is also very clear that both individuals believe that they in particular are the best—not the other! Well right now, in my opinion, you would have to say that Shawn is the best simply because he defeated Bret in the middle of the ring at *WrestleMania XII*—1-2-3!



(Forget their '92 *Survivor Series* match—Shawn was just a boy at the time.) So the question remains: WHEN (not if) the two meet again, what exactly will the outcome determine? Will it determine who is "the Best"? If Shawn wins, it clearly has to define him as "the Best". If Bret wins? Perhaps round three—to determine "the Best" once and for all!

You know what I think? I don't believe for one second that Planet W is big enough for both Shawn and Bret. I truly believe that, in time, one will be forced out by the other! Either the teacher will oust the student or the student will send the teacher—and his apple—PACKING!!!

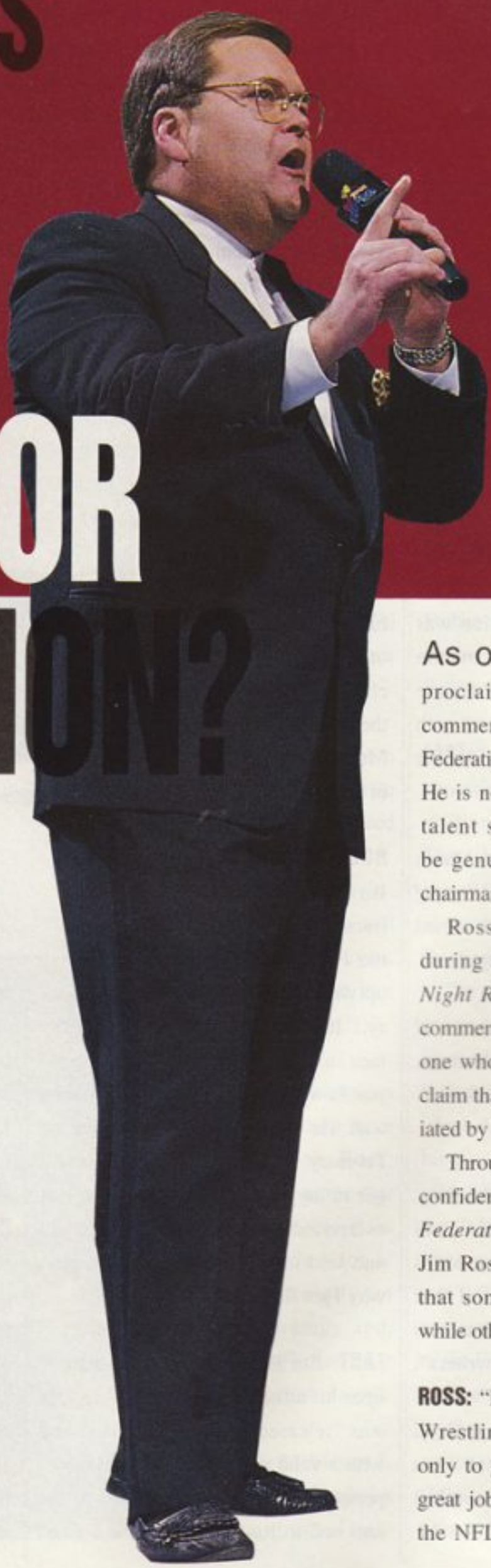
What's my prediction?

Hell, they don't pay me that kind of money—to give that kind of an answer!!! ■

WF
RAW
EXCLUSIVE PHOTO
One Word:
SMOKIN'!

JIM ROSS

FACT OR FRICTION?



By Lou Gianfriddo

As of late, Jim Ross—the self-proclaimed "best play-by-play commentator in the World Wrestling Federation"—has vented his vengeance. He is not only upset with the current talent situation, but also seems to be genuinely angered at Federation chairman Vince McMahon.

Ross let his hostility be known during several episodes of *Monday Night RAW* this past fall. His initial comments stunned and shocked everyone who heard them, in particular the claim that he was mistreated and humiliated by McMahon several years ago.

Through our network of insiders and confidential sources, *World Wrestling Federation Magazine* has probed the Jim Ross issue. We have discovered that some of his points are justified while others are sheer BS.

ROSS: "I have no loyalty to the World Wrestling Federation. I have loyalty only to good ol' J.R. In 1993, I left a great job in Atlanta [where he covered the NFL's Atlanta Falcons' football

games on radio] and came to the recognized leader in sports-entertainment—the World Wrestling Federation... I show up at *WrestleMania IX* in Las Vegas; they [front office personnel, possibly?] gave me a sheet to wear and said [the event] was gonna be some sort of toga party. 'You'd look good in a toga, J.R.,' they said. It's crap!"

FACT: Indeed, when Ross made his Federation broadcast debut at *WrestleMania IX*, he in fact wore a toga. However, on the videotape Ross was enjoying himself.

One former wrestling announcer told a magazine source that "Ross was having the time of his life; he never realized the World Wrestling Federation was so much fun". He came to the Federation, the source says, because he wasn't "professionally content" with his role as a radio broadcaster for the Atlanta Falcons.

ROSS: Then [following *WrestleMania IX* in 1993] I went to the first *King of the Ring* in Dayton, Ohio, and I carried the broadcast... Then, J.R. disappeared. Let me tell you why.

Because the egotistical boss of the Federation, Vince McMahon, couldn't stand the competition. So J.R. disappeared.

FACT: Following the *King of the Ring*, this magazine learned that Ross was released from the Federation due to his lack of loyalty. It was learned that Ross was revealing sensitive business with independent "dirt-sheet writers", as one wrestler put it.

In essence, Ross jeopardized ongoing marketing deals that were paramount to the Federation's survival in the sports-entertainment world. McMahon was justified in his actions. Any employee or contractor who is caught discussing sensitive issues with anyone unrelated to the Federation is in serious violation. These same standards apply in most corporate environments, and there is really no legal recourse the accused party has in order to regain employment with the company.

Ross shouldn't have felt singled out. McMahon has done the same with other disenchanted or, perhaps, disobedient employees in the past. However, Ross did get a second chance, thanks in part to the genuine decent side of Vince McMahon, who has said time and again, "Everyone deserves a second chance, no matter who they are or what they did. Maybe I'm an old softy in that regard."

ROSS: Then on Super Bowl Sunday in 1994 [months after his return to the Federation], I woke up with an affliction called Bell's Palsy... It looked like the left side of my face suffered a stroke. Now lemme tell you how warm-hearted Mr. McMahon was. He called me into his office on February 11, 1994, and fired my ass! I got in my car and drove home to that overpriced hell-hole called Connecticut and told my wife and two little girls why I got fired.

FACT: Jim Ross wasn't "terminated" upon his affliction with Bell's Palsy. He was "released from his contract" and with a valid reason. From McMahon's perspective, it would be unfair to the fans and to Ross himself to be viewed by the public in such a debilitated condition. A source close to McMahon has even told this magazine that "he [McMahon] often inquired as to the progress of Ross with frequent telephone calls". Ross, though, has never made mention of any such contact. He made McMahon out to be evil and heartless. Still, several months later, with the effects of the disease evident, Ross was once again returned to the broadcast booth.

"What television producer would bring back a man with Bell's Palsy?" McMahon asked during an episode of *Live Wire* on the USA Network later in October. Ross didn't see it that way.

ROSS: Remember when McMahon got indicted [for alleged anabolic steroid distribution] and they [Federation television producers] needed someone to do *RAW*? Well, they called J.R... Then [in 1995] they got me a third time for 50 cents on the dollar and put me to work in the front office [Titan Tower in Stamford, Connecticut]. Now, do you think all these guys [Federation super-

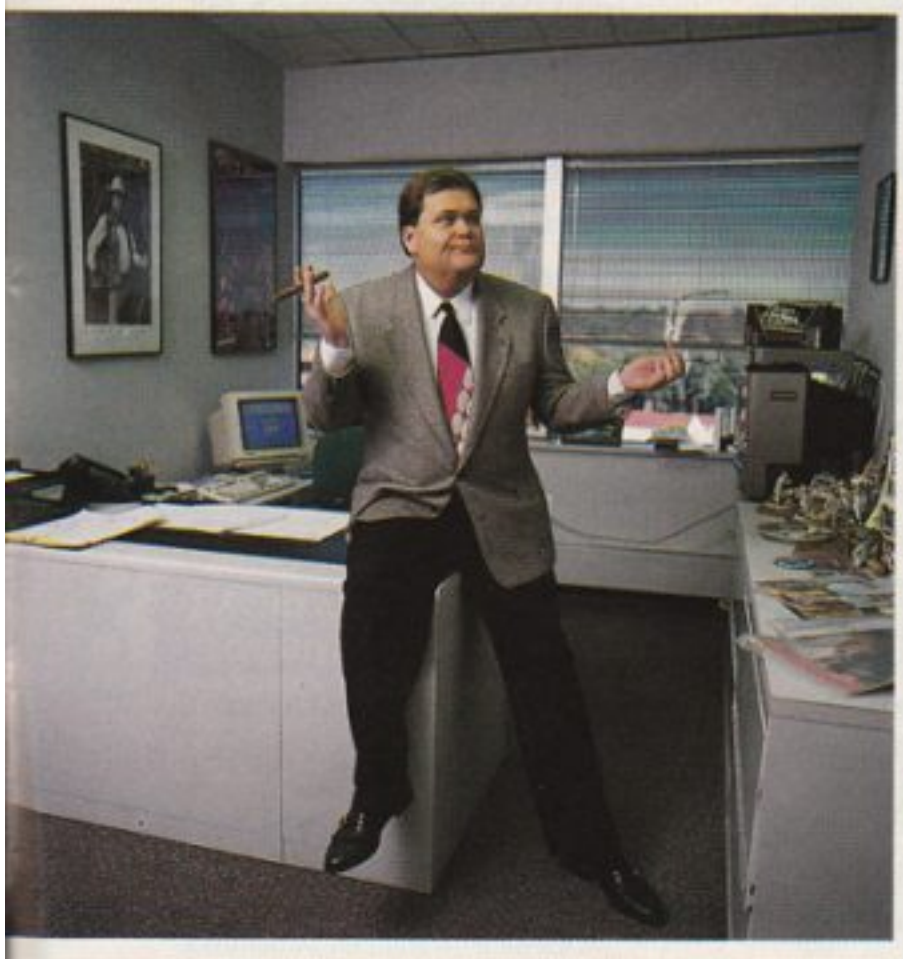
stars and key office staff] leaving the World Wrestling Federation was an accident? Of course not! Do you think all these guys coming to the Federation is an accident? Absolutely not!

FACT: Ross has, in fact, been through the doors of the World Wrestling Federation on several occasions. For the most part, his statements are correct. Federation television producers needed Ross to cover for McMahon on *RAW* during McMahon's much publicized federal trial. However, that was purely for legal reasons—reasons which the Federation's legal counsel wouldn't elaborate on when we contacted them. Not too long after McMahon was declared "Not Guilty", Ross came to work on the executive floor of the World Wrestling Federation building and accepted a job that entails contract negotiations for prospective Federation superstars. His job has also expanded a bit and now includes the contract negotiations for "any Federation talent", says one source. As far as wrestlers leaving the Federation, there isn't much validity to Ross' claims. Scott Hall, for instance, allowed his contract to expire and he chose to flee from the Federation; the same, in one degree or another, is true for Hall's friend Kevin Nash. Now Ross says he has brought back Razor Ramon and Diesel. However, these superstars are not the superstars Federation fans once adored—they are cheap imitations of the REAL athletes, despite Ross' claims to the contrary. A week after Ross' tirade on *RAW*, he returned to the broadcast position and argued with Federation president Gorilla Monsoon. Once again, Ross spoke in half-truths. He told the story to a degree, but not the whole story, say our insiders.

ROSS: Look at his [Razor Ramon's] contract, Monsoon. His name is Razor Ramon.

FACT: Because Ross has the ability to manipulate contracts on the corporate level, the name on the contract is indeed Razor Ramon. Not Scott Hall.

ROSS: An athlete by any name is still an athlete in my eyes. And Razor Ramon is a great athlete.



FACT: Some wrestlers we have contacted have concurred with Ross; however, most agree that Razor Ramon—the Ross version—needs a lot of training, especially on defensive strategy and, says one of the Hart brothers, "psychology".

ROSS: Vince McMahon is an ego-maniac... I'm not a corporate butt-kisser.

I didn't bring Doink to the Federation. Did it make anyone proud to see clowns in the World Wrestling Federation?

FACT: Maybe not, but Doink the Clown provided entertainment and fun for millions of children the world over. That is what the Federation is about. It's about fun. It's about athleticism. It's about excitement on all levels. The way Ross sees the Federation, we're told, is as "an entity designed to embarrass employees and fans". We have also learned that Ross' remarks about the Federation and its boss must go unpunished. Apparently Ross has manipulated his own contract into a three-year deal, including a clause that states that he "can't be dismissed for any reason". So, Ross will be allowed, or permitted if you will, to slander Vince McMahon's name and to perpetuate lies to the fans of the Federation.

The question remains whether Ross' friction within the Federation's infrastructure will bring about its demise. Only you, the fans, can help. That's the bottom line... and the final fact.

Vince Russo

Rebuttal

Being a strong supporter of the Fifth Amendment—that being the Freedom of Speech—I made the editorial decision to assign the following story to freelance writer and former assistant editor Lou Gianfriddo, knowing full well that Gianfriddo was an avid supporter of the chairman of TitanSports, Vince McMahon. HOWEVER, even though the job of a "real" journalist is to be fair and unbiased, I feel that Mr. Gianfriddo was everything but.

There are so many holes in Mr. Gianfriddo's story that it would be unconstitutional to Jim Ross unless somebody—that being me—closely examined and picked apart some of his opinions and ideas.

This is the *Raw* magazine and between these pages, we tell it like it is. In the opinion of this editor, Lou Gianfriddo did not.

From the first sentence, Gianfriddo takes a cheap shot at Ross, labeling him the "self-proclaimed" best play-by-play commentator in the World Wrestling Federation. "SELF-PROCLAIMED?" I beg to differ. I, as well as thousands, no perhaps MILLIONS, of other fans across the globe label Ross THE BEST. His play-by-play is second to none. If you take the time to listen to his commentary during any broadcast you too will—WITHOUT QUESTION—realize that. He is the only play-by-play man who can "intelligently" call holds. If the move has a name... Jim Ross knows it. From his first day in this business, Jim Ross has only helped to educate me, as well as millions of other fans, about the business.

No, Mr. Gianfriddo, I was not "SHOCKED" nor was "EVERYONE" else who heard Ross' comments on *Monday Night RAW*. If you had been a colleague of Mr. Ross over the past three years, you already knew the story, and you knew it well. It's true that he tried to keep it close to his vest, but on occasion he would confide in those close to him. This story had been building for some time. Jim Ross did not concoct it in his head for the sake of ratings, as some—INCLUDING YOU—would like to believe. He lived it EVERY DAY!

A "former wrestling announcer told a magazine source that 'he [Ross] was having the time of his life; he never realized the World Wrestling Federation was so much fun'." What announcer... what source, Mr. Gianfriddo? If you're going to make a statement like that, then back it up with FACTS. Your comments come across as nothing more than "hearsay." And, in my opinion, perhaps that's all they are. Then that same "source" (of course) went on to say that "Ross wasn't 'professionally content' with his role as a radio broadcaster for the Atlanta Falcons."

Well, Mr. Gianfriddo, according to THE SOURCE himself, Jim Ross said that statement is nothing but pure BS! As a matter of fact, he was EXTREMELY content at the time! He was working two jobs in Atlanta, for the Falcons and WCW. According to Ross, he accepted the job with the World Wrestling Federation based on the promise of "opportunity". Now I ask you, Mr. Gianfriddo, when you were hired as assistant editor many years ago, weren't you also showered with promises of "opportunity"? My question is: What happened to that OPPORTUNITY when you were released, or should I say terminated—THEY'RE ONE AND THE SAME—without notice? C'mon, if anybody should know what Jim Ross is talking about, you should!!!

And by the way, last but not least, WE ALL HATED DOINK THE CLOWN.

Mr. Gianfriddo, I recommend that next time you open your mind just a wee bit... that is, if you ever want to write for this magazine again!!!

VINCE RUSSO ■

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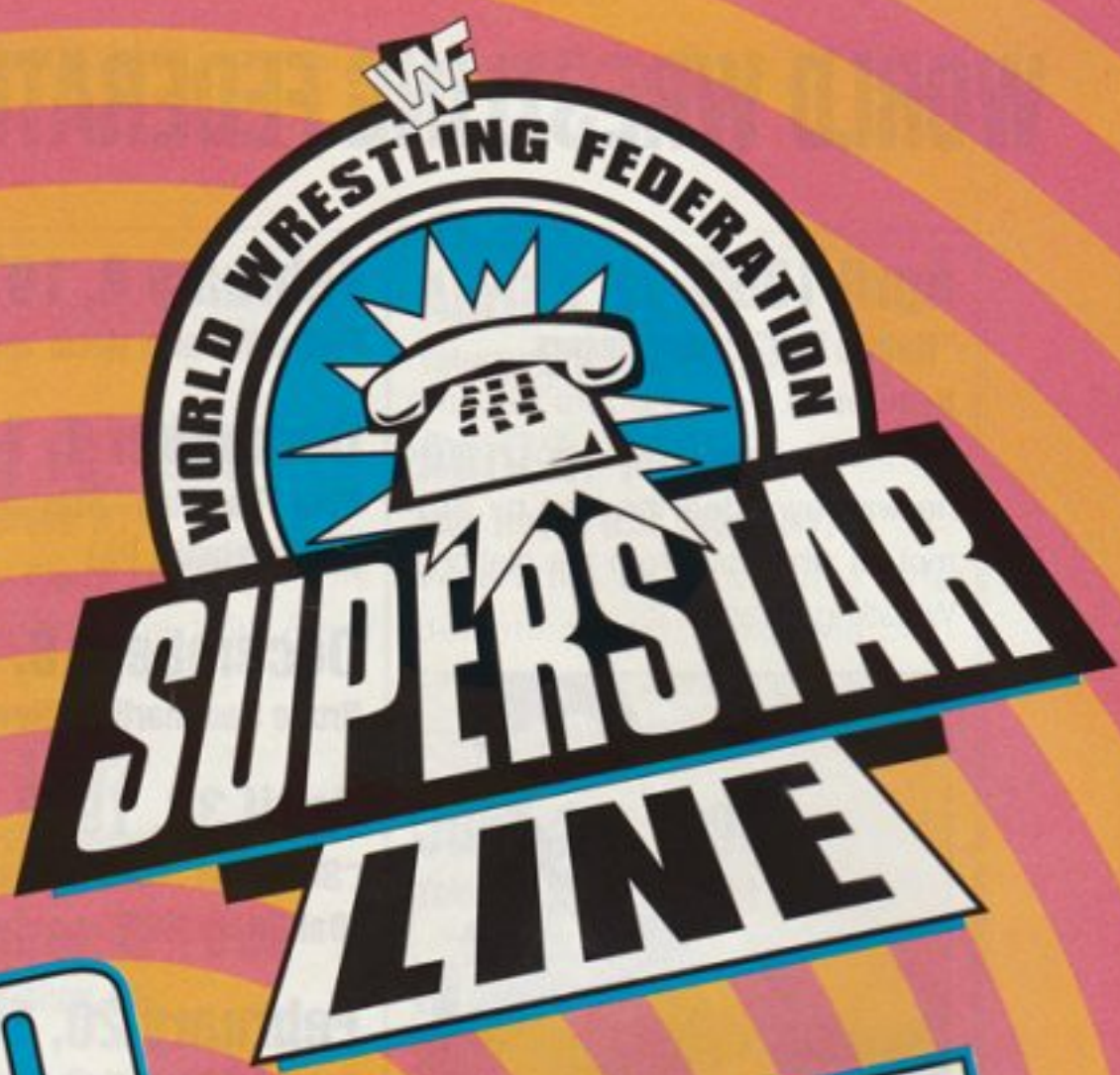

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4 Crowin' With Cornette
The gospel according to the walking blue light special...or so he would want you to believe!

5 Federation Challenge Game
Take on a Federation Superstar. If you emerge victorious, you'll win a prize!

6 The Ross Report
Jim Ross has all the news and behind the scenes info on Federation happenings!

7 French/Canadian Report with Ray Rougeau
The latest Federation news from the Great White North!

8 Post Match Interviews
During every Federation pay-per-view event, hear comments from the winners and losers of the matches that take place!

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION TITLE HISTORY

April 1963
"Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers

Federation Fact: Rogers became the first Federation Champion after he was awarded the belt by promoters who split from the National Wrestling Alliance.

May 17, 1963
Bruno Sammartino (New York, NY)

Federation Fact: On July 15, 1967, Sammartino lost to Ray "Crippler" Stevens in a match in San Francisco, California. Although Stevens was declared the new champion at the arena, Federation officials failed to recognize him nationally. Sammartino remains the defending Champion.

January 18, 1971
Ivan Koloff (New York, NY)

February 8, 1971
Pedro Morales (New York, NY)

December 1, 1973
Stan "The Man" Stasiak (Philadelphia, PA)

December 10, 1973
Bruno Sammartino (New York, NY)

April 30, 1977
"Superstar" Billy Graham (Baltimore, MD)

February 20, 1978
Bob Backlund (New York, NY)

1979—World Wide Wrestling Federation Title becomes World Wrestling Federation Title.

November 30, 1979
Antonio Inoki (Tokushima, Japan)

Federation Fact: Inoki's Federation Title victory is not acknowledged in North America by the World Wrestling Federation.

December 6, 1979 Federation Fact: Federation Title is declared vacant after a controversial decision between Bob Backlund and Antonio Inoki in Japan.

December 7, 1979
Bob Backlund

Federation Fact: After a decision by Federation officials, Backlund returns to North America as Champion.

October 19, 1981 Federation Fact: Greg "The Hammer" Valentine is mistakenly given the title after Backlund actually beats him. Backlund wins the rematch that night and reclaims the gold.

December 26, 1983
Iron Sheik (New York, NY)

January 23, 1984
Hulk Hogan (New York, NY)

February 5, 1988
Andre the Giant (Indianapolis, IN)

February 1988 Federation Fact: Federation Title is declared vacant after Andre tries to give it to Ted DiBiase. Federation officials rule that cannot be done and the title is held up.

March 27, 1988
Randy Savage (Atlantic City, NJ)

Federation Fact: Savage wins the title in a tournament final over Ted DiBiase.

April 2, 1989
Hulk Hogan (Atlantic City, NJ)

April 1, 1990
Ultimate Warrior (Toronto, Ontario, Canada)

January 19, 1991
Sgt. Slaughter (Miami, FL)

March 24, 1991
Hulk Hogan (Los Angeles, CA)

November 27, 1991
Undertaker (Detroit, MI)

December 3, 1991
Hulk Hogan (San Antonio, TX)

December 4, 1991 Federation Fact: Federation Title is declared vacant after Federation officials decide the title changed hands on controversial decisions.

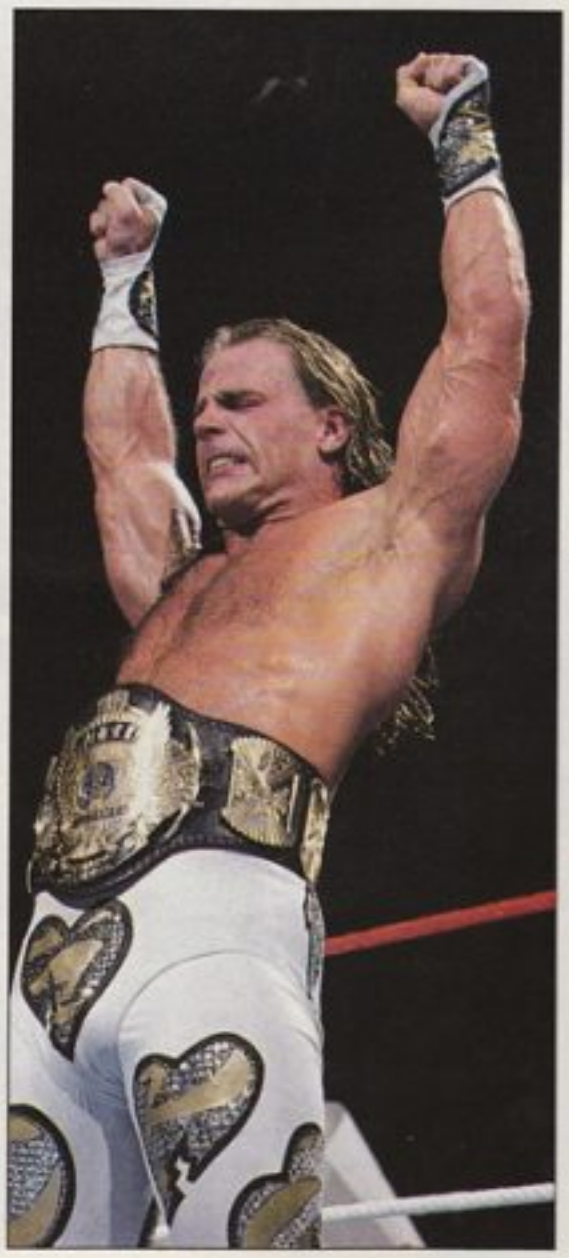
January 19, 1992
Ric Flair (Albany, NY)

Federation Fact: Flair wins the title after winning the 1992 *Royal Rumble*.

April 5, 1992
Randy Savage (Indianapolis, IN)

September 1, 1992
Ric Flair (Hershey, PA)

October 12, 1992
Bret "Hit Man" Hart (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada)



April 4, 1993
Yokozuna (Las Vegas, NV)

April 4, 1993
Hulk Hogan (Las Vegas, NV)

Federation Fact: Minutes after defeating Hart, Yokozuna challenges Hogan in the ring. Yokozuna loses the title when Hogan pins him.

June 13, 1993
Yokozuna (Dayton, OH)

March 20, 1994
Bret "Hit Man" Hart (New York, NY)

November 23, 1994
Bob Backlund (San Antonio, TX)

November 26, 1994
Diesel (New York, NY)

November 19, 1995
Bret "Hit Man" Hart (Landover, MD)

March 31, 1996
Shawn Michaels (Anaheim, CA)

A special thanks goes out to Royal Duncan and Gary Will whose *Wrestling Title Histories—Third Edition*, published by Archeus Communications in Canada, provided us with valuable information while compiling this list.

THE NIGHT THE BELT CHANGED HANDS

Randy Savage vs. Ricky Steamboat

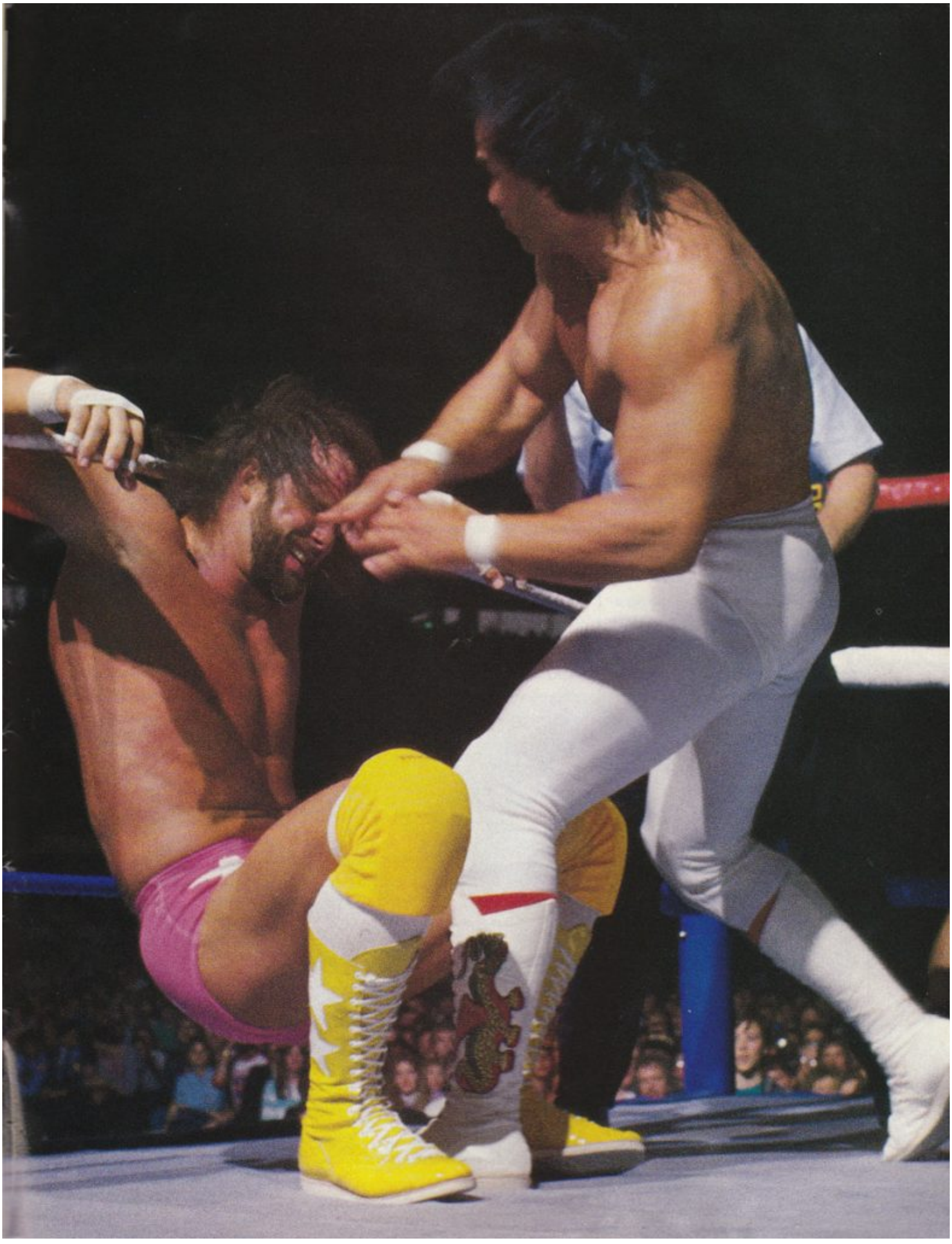
BY KEITH ELLIOT GREENBERG

In 1987, Randy "Macho Man" Savage's career was coming into full bloom. He was the World Wrestling Federation Intercontinental Champion, he boasted the beautiful Miss Elizabeth as his manager and he was redefining the word "daring" by coming off the turnbuckles to punish adversaries on the arena floor in the heat of battle.

It was during one such exchange that Savage deliberately injured Ricky "The Dragon" Steamboat, driving the popular Hawaiian's throat into the guardrail with a double ax-handle from the top rope, then crushing the larynx with the timekeeper's bell. After a lengthy stay on the disabled list, Steamboat went into *WrestleMania III* determined to strip Savage of his pride by snaring the Intercontinental strap.

As a secret weapon, Steamboat brought along George "The Animal" Steele, a primitive wrestler who had developed an obsession with Elizabeth.

The Dragon was smoking, as the opening bell clanged. After hurting



Savage with a series of high armdrag takedowns, Steamboat gripped his opponent by the neck and tossed him hard on the mat. Savage then provoked Steamboat into chasing him around ringside and back into the squared circle. When Steamboat stepped through the ropes, the Macho Man pounced, working over the challenger's vulnerable neck area.

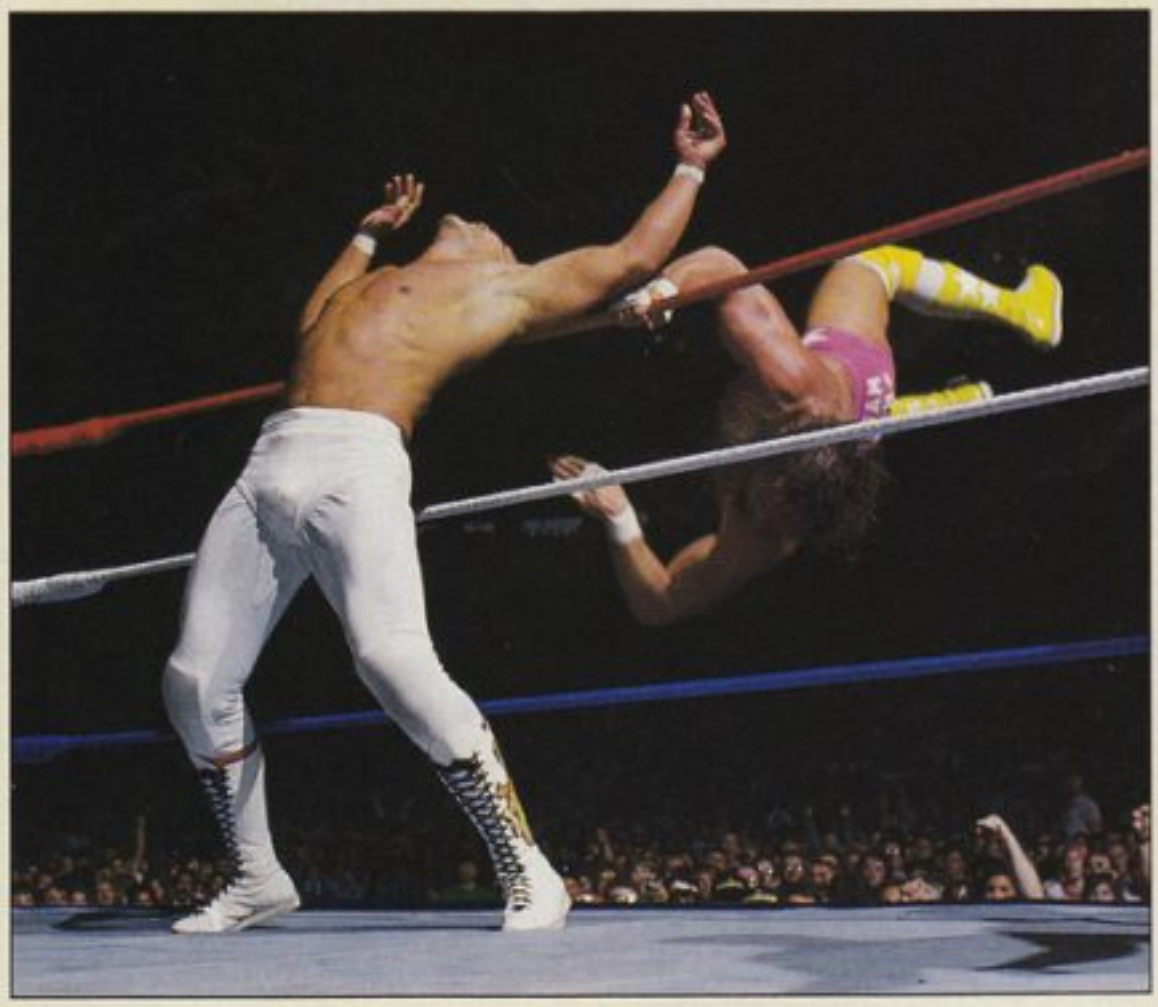
Despite the severity of the assault, Steamboat held on, lashing out at his rival with flying fists. He tried an Irish whip, but Savage reversed it. Steamboat bounced off the cables and surprised his foe with a cross bodyblock, followed by an armdrag and two shoulder blocks. The contender picked up speed now, but Savage was far from overwhelmed. As Steamboat ran the ropes, the Macho Man got behind him and delivered a high knee to the spine. Believing that Steamboat was weaker than he seemed, Savage coolly tossed his opponent over the top rope. But the Dragon kept his wits, grabbing onto the top rope and muscling himself back up into the ring. Unfortunately for the challenger, Savage was lying in wait, clotheslining his adversary out of the ring as soon as his feet were planted on the canvas.

At ringside, Savage kept up the torture by driving a knee into Steamboat's back and knocking him over the guardrail into the audience. Steele rushed over to hoist up Steamboat and roll him back into the ring. But Savage simply grabbed his foe's limp body and chucked it over the top rope. After mounting the turnbuckles, Savage then hit his opponent with a double ax-handle on the arena floor.

Hoping to end the match, Macho Man forced the challenger back into the ring, ascended to the top rope and delivered another double ax-handle, followed by an elbow smash. Holding Steamboat by the back of the head, Savage stampeded to the ropes and hopped over, while driving the Dragon's neck into the strands.

After a pair of suplexes, Savage tried an atomic drop—and was stunned when Steamboat rolled over his opponent's shoulder, landed on his toes and sliced at the Intercontinental titlist with stinging chops. The Dragon slung his foe off the ropes and bent down to execute a backflip, but Savage put on the brakes and kicked Steamboat in the neck.

Macho Man backed up and charged his foe. Steamboat positioned himself against the ropes, crouched down and shocked the champ with a high back bodydrop to the arena floor. Back in the ring, Steamboat sailed off the buckles



and delivered a karate chop to his opponent's head. He covered Savage for the count, but Macho Man managed to slip a foot across the bottom rope.

The Hawaiian now tried wrapping up the contest with a sunset flip, but Savage cracked his legs across his opponent's head and disrupted the pinfall. Steamboat attempted a rollup, reverse double leg hookup, small package and slingshot into the steel post. But Savage refused to go down. The Dragon went for yet another cradle, and Macho Man grabbed the challenger's tights, rolling on top of the Dragon as the referee counted to two.

The two gladiators ripped at each other, each attempting an Irish whip. They went around and around—until Steamboat inadvertantly collided with the referee. Savage zapped the Dragon with a clothesline, executed a flying elbow and lay across Steamboat for several seconds. But the referee was too dazed to register the count.

Infuriated, Savage stomped to ringside, grappled the bell away from the timekeeper and began mounting the apron, bent on re-injuring Steamboat's throat. Coming to the aid of his friend, Steele joined the Macho Man on the apron, gaining possession of the bell and then jumping to the arena floor. From the apron, Savage kicked the Animal, took back the bell and then climbed the turnbuckles. But Steele ran up behind him and shoved him—headfirst—into the ring.

As the referee came to, a groggy Savage stood over his opponent and scooped him up for a bodyslam. But Steamboat had had time to recover. As he was turned upside down, he hooked his arm around Savage's knees and rolled forward, locking the Macho Man's shoulders to the mat. This time, the referee was in a perfect position to log the three-count and award the Intercontinental Title to Steamboat.

It was Steamboat's greatest triumph in the World Wrestling Federation. Eventually, he would lose the belt to the previously unheralded Honky Tonk Man. And while a tearful Savage appeared to be the loser at *Wrestle Mania III*, he would quickly rebound—winning his first World Wrestling Federation Heavyweight Title at a tournament the following year at *WrestleMania IV*. ■

FANTASY

GOLDUST VS.

GOLDUST
HEIGHT: 6'6"
WEIGHT: 260 lbs.

BY BILL BANKS

Remember the name (inhale DEEPLY)... Dusty Rhodes? A name that is synonymous with "wrestling legend". For a short period of time during the late 80s and early 90s, the man known as the "American Dream" got his chance to make a full-time impression on the World Wrestling Federation (up until that point he had made only periodic pit stops in both the World Wide Wrestling Federation and the World Wrestling Federation). During that time he was looked upon by Federation fans and officials alike as the "people's fighter", or the "working class hero". A man who battled for what he

WARFARE

DUSTY RHODES

believed in and brought the best that the Federation had to offer... TO THE LIMIT!

On the other hand, there's the eccentric Goldust. A man who continues to climb to new Oscar-winning heights with each and every ring performance. A proven champion who has managed to take the flamboyance of Dusty Rhodes and somehow, some way taken it to even greater heights... with his own little "spin", of course!

So now the question becomes: If the two were to tango in a Fantasy Warfare, would Dusty get "Funky like a Monkey", or would he "never forget the name... Goldust"?

DUSTY RHODES
HEIGHT: 6'3"
WEIGHT: 289 lbs.

STRENGTHS:

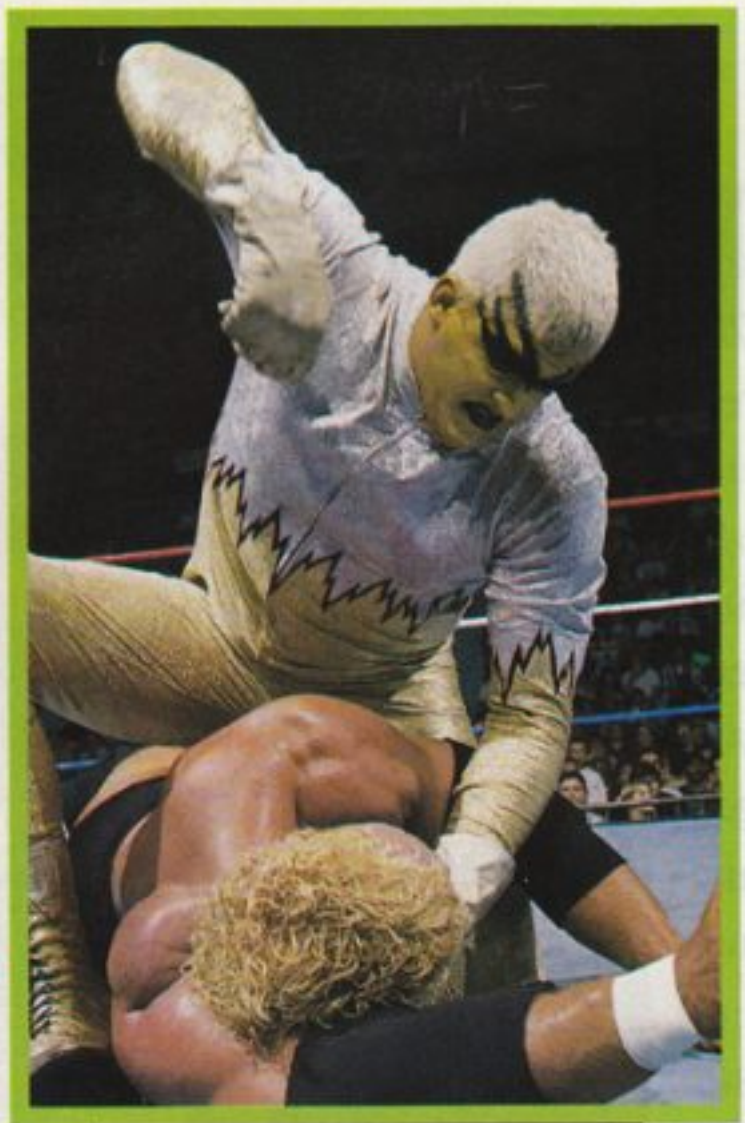
Since his inception into the World Wrestling Federation, Goldust has mastered the art of paranoia both in and out of the squared circle. This strategy has bagged him countless wins, the Intercontinental Title and numerous shots at the World Wrestling Federation Title. The simple fact is that many of Goldust's opponents find themselves "backed into a corner" long BEFORE ever setting boot in the ring. His reputation, and his reputation ALONE, is an intangible that many adversaries can't seem to get by. In many instances, Goldust has won the match before it even starts! That is what makes this man a pure genius.

WEAKNESSES:

If you remember the Hollywood horror romps *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Friday the 13th*, Freddy and Jason share a common weakness. Ironically enough, this may be Goldust's weakness as well. The young combatants who took down their demons in those movies used the same simple philosophy... they didn't fear the monster. With that mindset, the hormone-crazed teen idols were able to vanquish the demons... that is, of course, until the next year when the movie studios needed to cash in yet another sequel. If Federation superstars use that same Hollywood theory against Goldust—by not fearing his "bizarre" mind games—many superstars will be able to overcome him!

KEY WINS:

The day Goldust defeated Razor Ramon for the Intercontinental Title marked the first major box office smash for the "Shattered Dreams Production Company" of Marlena and Goldust. Make no film flub about it, it was a true classic! His moves that night? Breathtaking! His performance? Inspiring! Truly a "thumbs up" for Goldust's first title victory in the Federation! Also to his credit—and on a more recent note—the Golden One outlasted Sycho Sid, Stone Cold Steve Austin and Savio Vega to win the *Monday Night Raw* "Sudden Death" Battle Royal, which gave him the privilege of meeting Shawn Michaels for the Federation Title! When you can say that you defeated Sid, Austin and Savio all in one night, believe me, THAT'S SAYING SOMETHING!



GOLDUST

KEY LOSSES:

Much like the young, courageous heroes who were able to find a way to defeat Jason and Freddy (as seen above), only two men thus far have been able to overcome Goldust's strategy and pin his shoulders to the mat here in the World Wrestling Federation! Those two superstars? None other than Ahmed Johnson and Shawn Michaels! Going into his match with Goldust at the 1996 *King of the Ring*, where he took the Intercontinental Title from the actor, Ahmed Johnson had told the world he wasn't going to be bothered by his opponent's games—and he wasn't! That night, Goldust didn't have the psychological edge, because Ahmed didn't LET him have it! Shawn utilized the same game plan recently on *Monday Night RAW*, which enabled him to also best the "Bizarre One".

FINISHING MOVE:

Exit... stage left, or right—or through the canvas of the mat for that matter! Yes, it's the "Curtain Call", and when Goldust drops your cranium on the mat with this devastating move, you will truly be one of the long list of unfortunate extras who suffer a career-ending injury courtesy of "Shattered Dreams Productions"!

STRATEGY:

If it ain't broke, don't fix it! Goldust continues to use his "mind games" strategy to defeat opponents night in and night out, so what makes us think Dusty Rhodes would have been able to counter it? Unless the "blue-collared champion" got an education in "Bizarre Psych 101" in a hurry, then he would surely be under the same spell as Razor Ramon and the many others who were pinned by Goldust! The premier actor in the Shattered Dreams Productions has beaten bigger and badder men than Dusty... what difference would there be in this case?

STRENGTHS:

Perhaps one of the greatest attributes that made Rhodes a phenomenon in his heyday was his tolerance for pain! Most big men who graced our sport were just too bulky to counter an offense by their combatant. In other words, when most big men get hit with an onslaught, they go down and stay down! Quite the opposite was true for the "American Dream" who, after being pummeled for an entire match, seemed to only build up more stamina! In countless matches—against the likes of legends Tully Blanchard and Ole Anderson—we saw Dusty busted up and bleeding... only to come back, dance around the ring and lay out his opponent! Rhodes had a stamina for a big man that would make behemoths like Yokozuna and Vader think about refreshing their "wrestling" skills.

WEAKNESSES:

If there was one thing that limited Dusty's offense, it was the fact that for a ring veteran, Rhodes was as deep as low tide when it came to the depth chart of his knowledge of maneuvers. He was far too big for aerial moves, and he sure wasn't going to dazzle you with the motions of any high flyer. In most cases, Rhodes would just stand there and go fist-to-fist with you until someone hit the mat—and a good percentage of the time it was YOU!

KEY WINS:

No matter how "stylin' and profilin'" he was during his career, Ric Flair always seemed to end up on the short end of the stick whenever he faced Rhodes—many times for Flair's world title. Aside from his years as a champion, Rhodes was also a "jack-of-all-trades" at other aspects of the ring. First, Dusty was the master of the famed "Bunkhouse Brawl", and he also teamed with Nikita Koloff for tag team glory. Dusty could do it all... tag team, singles or anything else—the "American Dream" would always find a way to come out on top, no matter how the odds were stacked against him.

DUSTY RHODES

KEY LOSSES:

Although Rhodes was pinned to the mat on many occasions throughout his career—forcing him to give up many a title—his greatest loss came when he was no longer physically able to enter the squared circle. All the years of warfare he waged in the ring took a toll on his massive body, taking a few steps away from the offensive firepower he once held. Unlike today's baseball and football players—who go on the disabled list when an injury threatens them—Rhodes simply battled through the pain, which may have been a mistake later. If Dusty could had healed his injuries when he had the chance, perhaps time would have been more forgiving.

FINISHING MOVE:

"FEAR" was the word that most opponents used when describing the move known as the Bionic Elbow. This move was Rhodes' trademark throughout his career. Rhodes' immense elbow was something to fear—probably close to 12 inches thick—and his Bionic Elbow drop gave many of his opponents a migraine for their troubles! With Rhodes putting his weight into the blow, many of his foes were often found combing the ring apron for the remnants of their molars after a night's work.

STRATEGY:

Without a doubt, if these two men had ever gotten the chance to face each other in the ring, it would have been a battle for the ages. Both men would surely have been perplexed by the other's style, as Rhodes had never faced an "eccentric" foe quite like Goldust, and the closest the Golden Actor has ever come to a ring legend was his battle with Roddy Piper. Being that Goldust is a tad lighter than the American Dream, Dusty would have to plan for a long night of keeping up with the Golden One if he wanted to win. Like the legends of the past that he had faced, Rhodes would have to find a way to come back from a beating—which is what Goldust would ultimately dish out—and overcome the actor's mind games. Ironically, Dusty Rhodes was known as "Stardust" throughout his career—but in my opinion, after facing Goldust, he might be just another "Silly Boy" in the end! ■

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